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HELEN CAMERON.

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VOL. II.

HELEN CAMERON:

From Grub to Butterfly.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "MARY STANLEY; OR, THE SECRET ONES."

"I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in diverse tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 198, PICCADILLY.
1872.

250. B. 268.

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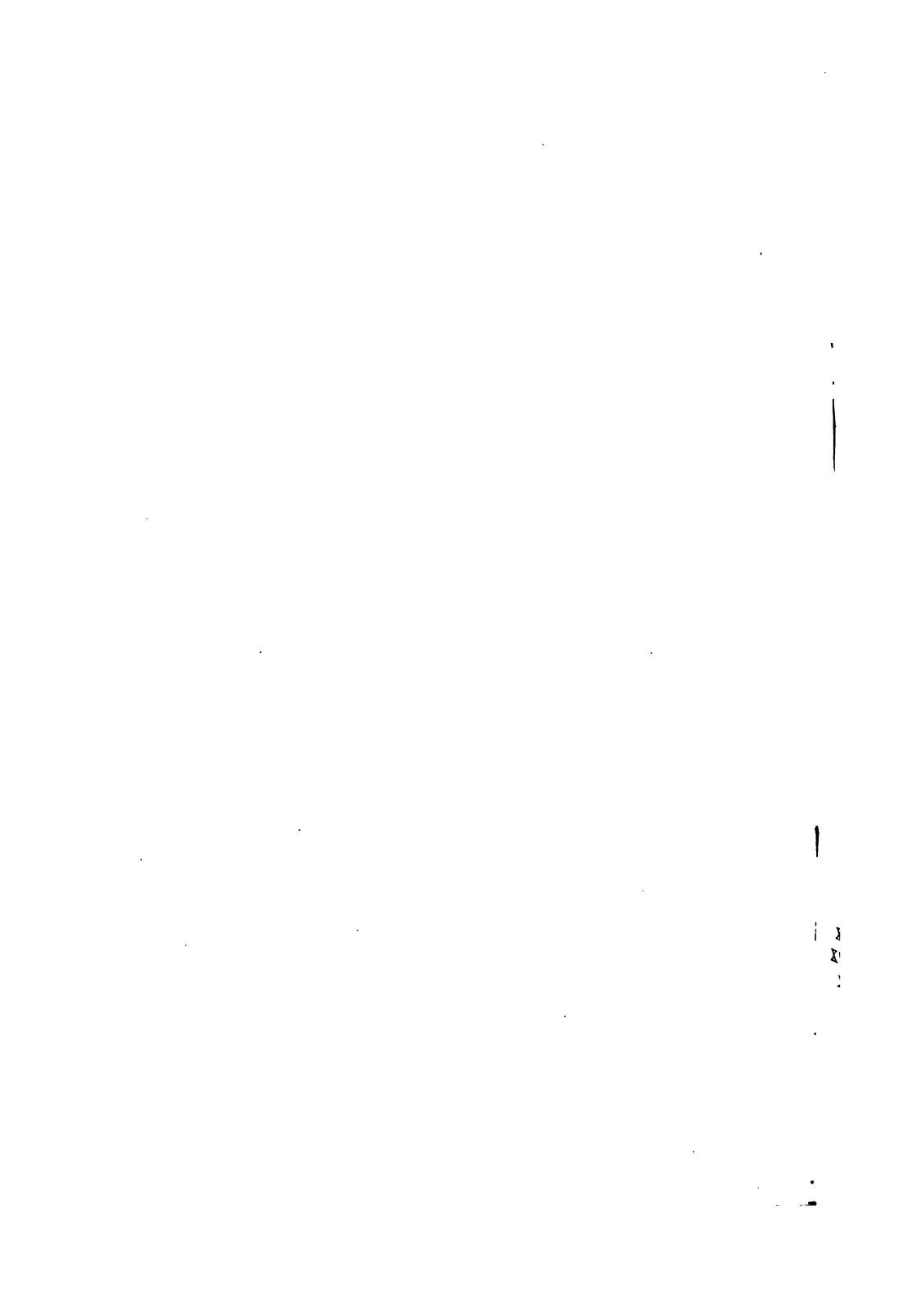
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HELEN CAMERON.

BOOK II.

THE CHRYSALIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST OF THE LAWSUIT.

*“ Wolsey. Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls as I do.”*

SHAKSPERE: King Henry VIII.

MR. TOLSTOY had informed Captain Maleenovsky of Count Golovin's return from the country; and the guardsman went more than once to the Secret Police Office without seeing the chief. Count Golovin was overwhelmed with business just then, and had greater things to think of than a lawsuit. But Captain Maleenovsky was almost as persevering as the widow in the parable, and was at last rewarded by—what I am going to tell you.

It was a few days after Anna's "private interview" with the Emperor that, on going for the sixth time to the Secret Police Office, he was told, to his joy, that Count Golovin was "at home." He stepped forward with a beating heart, and entered what he supposed to be Count Golovin's private cabinet.

The sight he saw was slightly disappointing: seated at a table there, busily writing, was—Mr. Izmailov! Well, Captain Maleenovsky *was* disappointed at first: still, on second thoughts, he believed that it might, on the whole, be better for him to have met Mr. Izmailov, and reminded him of his promise, before seeing Count Golovin. Mr. Izmailov rose when he saw the captain, shook him warmly by the hand, and, after greeting him heartily, asked him to take a seat. Maleenovsky was surprised at the warmth of his reception, and contrasted it, in his own mind, with the way in which *he* had received Mr. Izmailov at Doobeenovka. Heaping coals of fire on the head!

"You have come to remind me of my promise, I suppose," said Mr. Izmailov at length, smiling graciously: "I am sorry to hear that you have lost your cause in the Senate."

"I come in accordance with your advice,

hoping to see his highness, Count Golovin," answered Captain Maleenovsky frankly.

"And so you are disappointed?"

There was a merry twinkle in Mr. Izmailov's deep blue eye.

"Well, not exactly disappointed, sir: I am naturally anxious to see his highness as early as possible; because you must understand that I have been here several times without being able to see him."

"Count Golovin has been very busy of late."

"So I understand. But, I was going to say, sir, I am not sorry that I have met you before seeing his highness; as it gives me the opportunity of reminding you of your advice, and begging you to use your influence with Count Golovin on my behalf."

The merry twinkle in Mr. Izmailov's eye, merrier than ever.

"You may depend upon that!" he said, laughing heartily. "I may say, without boasting, that there is no man living who has more influence with Count Golovin than I. But, then, when I speak to his highness, it is in a fashion which Ivan (an old serf of mine, sir) constantly illustrates by saying: 'Says I to

myself.' 'Says Mr. Izmailov to Count Golovin' means: 'Says I to myself.' "

Captain Maleenovsky looked bewildered; and Mr. Izmailov laughed still more heartily at seeing the blank, puzzled look.

"I do not understand you, sir."

"I am Count Golovin."

"You!"

"I believe so," answered Mr. Izmailov, *alias* Count Golovin, laughing uproariously. "I have so many names (Izmailov, Marlinsky, Petrovsky, Baranovitch, and I don't know how many more), that I sometimes get confused among them all, and scarcely know which is which, or which is I; but I believe that my real name is Count Golovin."

Captain Maleenovsky stared. The gentleman to whom he had been so rude at Doobeenovka; whom he had not only refused to see, but almost ordered out of his house;—the great, "the terrible Count Golovin!" The man who had now become his only hope! And yet, what joy! It was Count Golovin himself, then, that had expressed such a deep interest in his case at Doobeenovka! It was the chief of the Secret Police himself that had promised to see justice done! His lawsuit was not lost, then, after

all! And he should yet call Helen Cameron his own!

"I am delighted to find an old acquaintance in your Highness," he exclaimed, beaming with joy.

His joy was soon dashed.

"An old acquaintance!" cried Count Golovin, rather sarcastically: "it looked like it the last time I saw you—did it not? That's the way you treat old acquaintances!"

"Your Highness was not an old acquaintance then," answered Maleenovsky.

"Why, I found it as hard to gain admittance to your presence as if you had been the Emperor himself; and when, by sheer dogged perseverance, I did get in, you nearly ordered me out of the room, if I remember rightly."

"I humbly beg your pardon, your Highness: I was so upset by the loss of my suit in the provincial court, that I was scarcely master of myself."

"If that's the way you treat your 'old acquaintances,' you will soon have ne'er a friend left to help you at a pinch."

And yet, in spite of all this, Captain Maleenovsky was by no means disheartened. The fact is, Count Golovin's looks all along belied

his words. The merry twinkle of his eye was never merrier than now; and his tone was more than friendly. As soon as he had finished speaking, he burst into loud roars of laughter. He had simply been chaffing the captain. Perhaps, too, teaching a gentle lesson of courtesy to the polite guardsman! And, therefore, as soon as he ended, Captain Maleenovsky found it quite easy to say:

"I come to claim the fulfilment of the promise which your Highness so generously gave me in spite of my rudeness."

"You have not forgotten the condition which I attached to that promise?" said Count Golovin significantly.

" 'If he is in office?' "

"Yes, sir," said Count Golovin, become quite serious at last. "For your sake, I am grieved to say that I am no longer in office: I am here now only to wind up affairs, before handing over the post which I held to my successor."

Captain Maleenovsky was astounded: he could never have dreamt of such a thing. In the eyes of all men, highness was a fixture in the Secret Police Office: indeed, the secret police seemed but the embodiment of Count

Golovin. Secret police without the count, but the play of *Hamlet* without the prince!

Nevertheless, it was too true. Count Golovin had refused to walk into the clever trap which Anna had so kindly set for him. At a glance he had seen that Prime Minister's "investigation" was meant to be "a farce." Promptly he had given his ultimatum: "Real inquiry, or—resignation of chief!" Prime Minister, relying on Anna's flattering estimate of Prince Gregory Ilinsky, had accepted—the latter!

Perhaps it was the heaviest blow which could have fallen on Russia at that time. For a moment, even Captain Maleenovsky forgot his own trouble in his sense of the loss which his country had sustained.

"What a calamity for Russia!" he exclaimed warmly.

"And for your sake I am still more sorry that my successor is the son of your antagonist in this lawsuit—Prince Gregory Ilinsky."

Thus were poor Captain Maleenovsky's hopes suddenly dashed to the ground. Not the slightest chance of righting the wrong now! Still, like a drowning man, he desperately clutched this last straw that had drifted toward him, and cried:

"Is there no hope for me?"

Hard to deal the last crushing blow; but kindest to do it at once, and save the victim from pursuing any *ignis fatuus* in the future.

"None whatever!" answered Count Golovin gravely.

The final doom, that! No reversal now. Poor Captain Maleenovsky was writhing within; but outwardly he looked calm and collected. He coolly rose from his seat to take his leave, and said:

"I must apologise to your Highness for taking up so much of your precious time to no purpose."

"No apology needed."

"Farewell, your Highness."

"Stop a bit," answered Count Golovin.

"Are there none of your late serfs whom you would like to buy? Though Prince Ilinsky is my bitter enemy, I have still influence enough left to accomplish that for you."

"No, your Highness: I have not the money wherewith to buy. When I have sold off all that I have to sell, I shall be largely in debt. This lawsuit has been frightfully expensive."

"That's a pity," said Count Golovin; "because there is one young fellow, Vanka, your

valet, whom I should have thought you would like to keep. He seems much attached to you."

"Ah, yes, I should have liked to keep him! He *is* a fine fellow," added Captain Maleenovsky warmly, almost enthusiastically; "though I never knew his worth till the other day."

And he related what Vanka had said and done the day on which the judgment of the Senate was pronounced. Count Golovin was silent for a moment, and then said:

"Suppose I lend you the money?"

"What use? I should never be able to repay it."

"Never mind the payment," answered Count Golovin persuasively: "take your own time over it. I can afford to wait till doomsday, if need be;" and he laughed.

"No, your Highness," said Maleenovsky firmly: "I shall be deeply enough in debt without that. Now that I am a poor man, I must learn to shift for myself."

"I admire your principles! But surely you will accept Vanka from me as a gift?"

"No!" answered Captain Maleenovsky proudly. "I must henceforth stand on my own legs, and work my own way in the world. I am very much obliged to your Highness for

your generosity ; but, in my position, it would not be right to accept the gift."

"You are a noble fellow !" exclaimed Count Golovin warmly, rising and shaking hands with Captain Maleenovsky. "In these days of fawning and cringing, it is really refreshing to meet with a MAN !"

"Thank you."

"If you will not be beholden to me," continued the count, "I hope you will not object to bestow a favour on *me*."

"A favour ! Oh, your Highness, what can a poor man like myself do for such as you ?"

"You can bestow on me the highest favour which one man can bestow on another ! And I ask it : if you are too proud to accept, I am not too proud to beg. Allow me the privilege of henceforth calling myself your friend !"

Captain Maleenovsky was not a man easily moved. But he was more touched by this speech than he liked to show. Strange, that as soon as trouble came upon him, every one he cared for began to be monstrously kind ! For some moments he did not speak : he felt that he would break down if he tried. And, when he did speak at last, his voice was husky and faltering. He pressed hard the

hand clasped in his, and said with deep feeling:

"For years I have revered your Highness from afar as the noblest man in Russia. And to think that *you*—— Forgive my weakness, your Highness: I have had some sleepless nights as well as anxious days of late. I am ashamed to show such weakness."

"Is not such weakness strength?" asked Count Golovin.

"But for one thing, I should say that your friendship is cheaply purchased by the loss of all my wealth."

"And that one thing?"

"Forgive me for not explaining it: it is a secret; and now that I am a poor man, without the slightest hope of ever becoming rich again, I hope it will remain a secret for ever."

Count Golovin smiled.

"It is the business of the secret police to find out secrets," he said; "and I fancy you rather underrate the extent of their knowledge. But never fear: neither Mademoiselle Cameron nor yourself will be the worse for my sharing your secret."

"Oh, your Highness!"

Captain Maleenovsky was startled. He had

often heard of Count Golovin's "universal knowledge;" but he had never dreamt that his own private affairs could come within its scope.

"I refused to give you any hope about your lawsuit," continued Count Golovin. "But it is otherwise with your love-suit. Henceforth let your motto be: *Nil desperandum!* Monsieur Cameron, in spite of his faults, is a good man."

This speech inspired Captain Maleenovsky with fresh hope. When he left the Secret Police Office, he certainly did not feel so low at heart as one might have expected. And then it struck him: Why not put the matter to the test at once? Why not frankly tell Mr. Cameron all that he felt? True, he had tried to test him before, but in a roundabout way. He had never told him openly: "It is your daughter that I love: will you give me your daughter?" Why not do so?

Accordingly he wended his steps toward Mr. Cameron's office. On his way, his heart fluttered strangely. He had learnt to control his feelings as few men have learnt; nevertheless, at this approaching crisis of his destiny, they played ducks and drakes with his control.

There was a tumult within him as he entered Mr. Cameron's sanctum, and found the owner seated in an arm-chair in front. The first sight of Mr. Cameron was far from discouraging. He looked shrewd, but friendly withal. He glanced at the young man in a sharp, piercing way: surprised, perhaps, to see him there; for Captain Maleenovsky had never honoured Mr. Cameron's office with his presence before. As soon as the greeting was over, and the captain had seated himself in a chair which Mr. Cameron handed to him, the latter asked:

"In what way may I serve you, monsieur?"

"Monsieur Cameron," answered Captain Maleenovsky, coming to the point at once, "you must have been surprised at some pointed questions which I asked you in the Summer Garden the other day."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Cameron bluntly: "there would be no use in denying it. One might have thought that you belonged to the secret police."

And he laughed; not unkindly, though.

"I had an object in view."

"I supposed so," answered Mr. Cameron, laughing again: "it is not usual for one

gentleman to cross-examine another without 'an object in view.' I never thought you a fool."

This speech rather discouraged the captain; but he went on undauntedly to the great object of his visit.

"Monsieur Cameron," he said, "when I first began to visit your house, I was a rich man, and thought I had a right to court the richest heiress in Russia. Under that impression, I fell in love with your daughter; and I have reason to believe that my love is returned."

Mr. Cameron darted a keen and not very pleasant glance at Captain Maleenovsky.

"What makes you think so?" he asked quite sharply: "have you been making her an offer?"

"No, monsieur," answered Captain Maleenovsky proudly. "I am not a scoundrel: I should think it beneath me to take advantage of the confidence you have placed in me."

Mr. Cameron was disarmed at once. In a softer tone he said:

"I beg your pardon."

"I have never even mentioned the subject of love to your daughter."

"What makes you think, then, that she returns your love?" asked Mr. Cameron keenly.

"Ah, monsieur, love has a thousand tongues."

"I believe you are mistaken," answered Mr. Cameron. "I earnestly hope that you are."

"Is there, then, no hope for me?"

Mr. Cameron, like most of us, had two sides to his nature. Better side pleaded strongly for Captain Maleenovsky. He was such a worthy man, and had behaved so honourably throughout. Was he in any respect worse, or less likely to make Helen happy, since the day when, after due inquiry, he was made free of Mr. Cameron's house? Poor! But was not Helen Mr. Cameron's only child; and was not the million which she would inherit enough in all conscience to keep her in comfort all her life? Against arguments like these there was nothing but pride and show and appearances to pit on the other side. What of that? Worse side gained the victory in Mr. Cameron's mind.

"None whatever!" said Mr. Cameron emphatically: "it would be ridiculous for one in my position to give his daughter to a man who has not a kopeck he can call his own!"

Well, it was a crushing blow ; and Captain Maleenovsky writhed under it. But you would not have thought so from his looks. As far as Mr. Cameron could see, he was as calm and unruffled as ever ; and, perhaps, if he had shown a little more of what he felt, even Mr. Cameron might have been touched, and forced to take pity on the man. But his power of hiding his feelings was amazing. His pride came to his help ; and he behaved with a lofty dignity which astonished Mr. Cameron.

“I bow to your decision,” he said, making a low bow. “Henceforth nothing is left me but to crush my love ; and, though it is a hard task, I shall do it—in time. Adieu, monsieur !”

Mr. Cameron was fairly touched. He wanted to say something which would soothe the young man ; but he hit upon the very worst topic of consolation which he could have chosen.

“I hope you will soon meet with another lady who will make up for your loss,” he said.

“Never !” cried Captain Maleenovsky with an energy which startled Mr. Cameron.

“Bless me !”

Captain Maleenovsky went on to say, in a softer and a quieter tone :

"I bow to your decision, monsieur ; but let us not try to deceive one another in this solemn hour of parting. The task to which you doom me is the hardest which man can undertake. I solemnly declare to you that I had much rather take a hatchet and chop off this leg in your sight. I could do it, monsieur ; and the pain would be less than the other. I shall bear it like a man ; but do not hoodwink your conscience by thinking that I shall ever forget Mademoiselle Cameron."

Mr. Cameron felt very uncomfortable. His conscience was touched as well as his heart. Could he not even yet recall his decision? Had he ever met a man to whom he would more willingly intrust his daughter? Worse side, alas, was too strong for better side !

"I am sorry for you, monsieur," he said ; "and I sincerely hope that you will soon succeed in the task."

Captain Maleenovsky looked at him in a searching way which he did not like.

"Is there any other barrier beside my poverty?" he asked at length.

"Certainly," answered Mr. Cameron: "I would greatly prefer my daughter to marry one of her own countrymen."

He spoke almost gleefully : glad enough to have so good an answer to give to his own conscience as well as to Captain Maleenovsky. His answer was true enough as far as it went ; and yet, when the captain was a rich man, Mr. Cameron had not thought that his being a Russian was a sufficient barrier.

After that, Captain Maleenovsky had nothing more to say. He bowed very low, and took his leave. He had entered the office full of hope : he left it a crushed and broken man. And yet no one would have thought so from his appearance. He held up his head, and walked away proudly. His step was firmer than ever, and his whole mien more elevated. When he returned to his lodgings, Vanka had no idea that another blow had fallen upon his master.

CHAPTER II.

THE INTRUDER.

“Marcelia. You durst not else, the duke being wholly mine,
His power and honour mine, and the allegiance
You owe him as a subject due to me——

Mariana. To you?

Marc. To me: and therefore as a vassal
From this hour learn to serve me; or you'll feel
I must make use of mine authority,
And as a princess punish it.”

MASSINGER: *The Duke of Milan.*

WE saw how ill the Emperor was. Unhappily, he grew worse, and at length, after a severe struggle, was quite laid aside. Doctors called his disease “violent erysipelas,” which began in the leg, but, spreading through the blood, soon touched the whole frame, and at last, fixing itself on the brain, brought on delirium. I am giving doctors’ opinion, not my own: opinion recorded, and still to be read in the history of Russia. For days and days, Majesty lay unconscious: doctors at their wits’ end, despairing of his life.

Rumour of his illness spread through the empire, and plunged the nation into an agony of fear and grief. There were a few, indeed,

who did not share the national feeling. Red-hot Radicals, members of the *Union* and others, heard of it with something like relief, and busily laid their plans for the fatal issue which might come. Red-hot Churchmen, on the other hand, saw in it the finger of God. Wretched Majesty! Served him right! A judgment for encouraging heresies in the orthodox Greek Church! A punishment for abandoning the orthodox Greek nation! To ordinary mortals, there seems no connection between the sin and the doom. But when did red-hot Churchmen ever reason? In any Church? He that is without sin among us, let him first cast a stone at them. A generation that lives in glass-houses can't afford to throw stones. Folks who can gravely trace the potato-rot to the Maynooth Grant, or the rinderpest to the prevalence of pantheism, are scarcely entitled to point the finger of scorn.

Among those who did not look on Alexander's illness with unmingled sorrow, we must reckon our friend Anna, Princess Donskaya: but not on the same grounds as the others; cause neither political nor religious, but purely personal. To give her her due, she did not believe that Majesty would die. She had faith

in her star; and she had a strong conviction that Alexander would live, to enable her to achieve her triumph. Why should not an Alexander have been created to carry out an Anna's clever plans? And what a chance his illness was for her! Would it not enable her to throw her spell over him? She would nurse him with the utmost tenderness: he would owe his life to her care; and he would never forget the soft hand that smoothed his pillow, and the loving eyes that hung over him as he lay tossing in his bed. He would rise from that bed fastened to her apron-strings, to be led in triumph as a tame lion at her heels. Trust Anna. for doing a stroke of business neatly!

She took her measures with great forethought and wariness, so as to guard against all interruption. What about Prime Minister? Better take him into her counsels: he could make or mar her plan. So she went to him, and unfolded her plan in the cunningest way. Prime Minister himself the leading figure in the picture she drew: *his* power, the lengthening of *his* term of office, the great aim of all her plans; all the influence which she might acquire over Majesty to be devoted to the honour and glory

of her beloved Count Baranovitch ! Prime Minister taken in—to be done for by-and-by ! Majesty's last threat of "abdication" too solemn to be overlooked ; Prime Minister's position, therefore, greatly needing to be strengthened. And who so likely to strengthen it as handsome coquette ? So clever ; so devoted to himself ! Prime Minister heartily fell in with her plans ; put all Majesty's servants formally under her orders, and strictly enjoined them to obey all her commands. In fact, handsome coquette became, for the time, undisputed mistress in the Winter Palace.

Luckily for her, not much to fear from without : all Majesty's nearest kindred either scattered afar, or rendered helpless for the time. Mother, laid aside by sickness, the shock of her favourite son's illness proving too much for her delicate frame ; wife, not likely to show her face in his chamber after the estrangement of years, capped, as it had lately been, by a seemingly gross insult ; brother Constantine, away at Warsaw, trying his hand at governing the unruly Poles ; brother Michael, on a visit to Constantine ; brother Nicholas, just started on a tour of military

inspection to the South of Russia. Majesty literally alone, so far as near kindred were concerned : left to the sharp practice of clever, fascinating Anna. Prime Minister's orders, that none should enter the sick-chamber without her leave : time enough, and means enough, to work her plan and cast her spell.

Having made these clever arrangements, Anna one day sat down by the sick-bed. Majesty asleep : time enough to indulge her thoughts, and look back to the past. Career hitherto an onward one : all barriers had fallen before her ; and she had marched on, step by step, up to the throne. And now the highest dream of her ambition was about to be fulfilled : she would not leave that sick-chamber but as the acknowledged mistress of Russia. Glittering prize within her grasp at last !

In the meanwhile, Majesty awoke, and glared upon her rather savagely at first. Anna frightened : about to ring for help. When, lo, the expression on Majesty's face changed ; and a tender loving look suddenly lighted it up. Cause of change not hard to guess. In his delirium, Majesty mistook her for his wife. With a tenderness the more touching from the mistake of madness, he cried :

"Dear Elizabeth! Come nearer: I did not know you at first—you are so changed!"

"Am I?" said Anna.

Surely best to humour his delusion for the time! Nay, could she not make it work into her own plan?

"It is very kind of you now, Elizabeth," continued the Emperor: "you have forgiven me—have you not?"

"Yes."

"God bless you, Elizabeth! I was told (who was it that told me?) that you cared for me no longer; that you wanted to insult me. But I don't believe it!"

"Hush! It is all right now."

"You love me still—do you not?"

"Yes, with all my heart."

"You are sure of it?"

"As sure as I am of my own existence."

"You can't be sure of that!" answered Alexander thoughtfully, with that mockery of thought which delirium often brings out. "No one can be sure of his own existence. You must be *more* sure."

"I am quite sure."

"Come and kiss me, then."

Anna hesitated: if she went too near him,

he might find out that she was not his wife. Indeed, would it not be wiser to undeceive him at once? No: better go on with the farce, even at the risk of being detected. So she went up to him warily, keeping as much as she could in the shade, and kissed him with great seeming tenderness and warmth.

"Keep as quiet as you can," she said.

She spoke in a whisper, and all whispers are much alike. The Emperor returned her kiss, and answered:

"You are more beautiful than ever, Elizabeth; and you seem to me to have grown younger of late."

And he looked at her fixedly, as if trying to account for the change. The look was so searching, that Anna began to feel uncomfortable; and, fearing lest he should be undeceived, she went back to her former place in the background. But, before she returned, she had whispered in his ear:

"It is my joy at your returning love that makes me look so much younger."

"Who was it that told me you loved me no longer now? Some one did, I know. It must have been that bold, bad woman: what is her name? I thought her so good and so pious at

one time ; but I have found her out at last. She has been deceiving me all along : I am sure she has. Ah, she is a bold, bad woman ! What is her name ? She is one of your ladies-in-waiting, you know."

"Princess Donskaya?"

It needed some effort to utter her own name at that moment. But Anna thought it best to humour the Emperor.

"Yes," answered Alexander, with a look of disgust : "she is a bold, bad woman !"

Here was a situation for a woman to be placed in ! Many a woman, after this, would have given up the game in despair. But Anna had unbounded trust in her own powers, and resolved to make the best of the unpleasant situation. Might she not gradually clear herself, and accustom him to look upon her in her own name, not only without scorn, but even with tenderness and love ?

But who could have warned the Emperor against her ? Not the Empress ; because she had not seen him. Not the Prime Minister ; because he was still devoted to her. It must have been the Empress-mother. Old Majesty never very friendly to handsome coquette ! A feeling of bitter hatred toward the good old

lady took hold of Anna's soul. Never mind ! She could counterwork, and undermine the Busybody ; and would it not be a glorious revenge for herself, and a bitter pill to the pious old soul, when she showed up her favourite son as a tame lion in leading-strings ?

Having come to this satisfactory conclusion, Anna set to work to countermine.

" You are mistaken in supposing that the Princess Donskaya is either bold or bad," she said gently and yet firmly : " her highness honestly tried to serve both you and me."

" *You* defend her !"

Majesty looked astonished.

" Why should I not defend her, when she is unjustly accused ? It would be wicked to desert her."

" I did not expect that of you, Elizabeth," continued the Emperor reproachfully.

" She has served me faithfully ; and I am not going to give her up to the slander of her enemies."

" I tell you she is a bold, bad woman !" exclaimed Alexander loudly, becoming very much excited.

" I am sorry you should think so."

" You must turn her away : she is not fit to

be near your person. She'll poison you one of these days !”

Well, it *was* a situation for a woman to be placed in ! The Emperor had become very violent : his voice had grown louder, till, at length, he had screamed out his last words. As if the state of things were not bad enough, the door opened at this moment ; and—the Empress Elizabeth entered the room.

She looked very pale ; paler than her wont : and the lines of sorrow on her face were more deeply marked. Easy to see that there had been a sharp struggle within her, before she could bring herself to enter the room of a husband who had so lately sent her an insulting message through a lady who seemed more intimate with him than herself. Nevertheless, her step was firm ; and she walked toward the bed with a dignity which became her well. But she started when she saw Anna, and for a moment arrested her steps.

Here was a difficulty for the ever-ready and brazen-faced coquette ! She thought herself deep : she was really very shallow. Cunning great, but insight small. Being false herself, she was evermore unwittingly deceiving herself ; mistaking appearances for realities. When

she fancied that Elizabeth was the last person to see Alexander, she was measuring the Empress by her own standard. She had mistaken a passing irritation for a rooted dislike. In truth, she was not deep enough herself to fathom the depth of love which lay in Elizabeth's heart.

Having failed to shut out the danger, she must set to work to remove it. But how? Majesty's delirious delusion suggested a plan. As he had mistaken her for the Empress, might he not be made to mistake the Empress for herself? Worth trying, at least. So she went up to the bedside, and asked him if he wished the Princess Donskaya to come in. As she had hoped, he grew violent, and, sitting up in bed, wildly commanded her to turn the wicked woman out. Thereupon, Anna walked up to the Empress, and, with great show of deference, told her that, in the present state of the Emperor's mind toward her, it was not fitting for her Majesty to be there. Elizabeth stared at the princess with unfeigned astonishment: she could scarcely believe the evidence of her own ears. Such presumption! And from one of her own ladies-in-waiting! Taking no further notice of Anna, she quietly walked on toward the bed.

"Turn her out!" exclaimed Alexander, with growing vehemence; "turn her out, I tell you!"

"Your Majesty sees that he does not desire your presence here," said Anna to Elizabeth.

The Empress still paid no heed to Anna's words, but calmly and firmly approached the bed. On seeing this, the Emperor grew wilder than ever, and began to rave.

"Out, you vile woman!" he cried. "Do not pollute my chamber with your presence!"

"I warn your Majesty that he is in a dangerous state," urged Anna: "your presence may kill his Majesty; and I throw all the responsibility on you."

The poor Empress staggered. It was as if a sword had pierced through her heart. True, her husband was in a delirious state; but the real feelings of the heart often came out in madness. Was not this feeling of bitter hatred to her the normal state of his mind, which he had deemed it politic to hide beneath a veil of outward civility? This, then, accounted for the estrangement of the last twenty years! Was this the end of all her longings and hopes? Poor dumb long-suffering wife! It was the last bitter dreg of the cup which

had to be drunk. But patience ! It is a long lane that has no turning.

It was an additional pang to see the brazen-faced coquette lording it over that sacred chamber. What she had feared, then, had come to pass ! The shameful past had been renewed ! But what could she do ? Nothing ! Nothing left her but to bow in patience. It would not suit her wifely dignity to enter into a quarrel with the intriguing usurper. Alas ! she had been so long schooled to sorrow, that the fresh element added to her wretchedness was but as an additional drop in the sea. Nothing was left but to retire, and leave the field to her rival : that was clear. She did not deign to speak to Anna, but quietly turned her back and went away. Patience, long-suffering wife !

Anna was not wise enough to hide her triumph : her manœuvre had proved so successful that, in her sudden tumult of joy, she lost control over herself. Ah, surely, a trifle too soon ! Success founded on a mistake which might yet be set right : surely too soon to act as if her empire were to be everlasting ; as if there were no further need for keeping terms with the poor heart-broken wife ! She actually

gave utterance to some scornful words, and spoke loud enough for the Empress to hear. But, though the words were stinging enough to bring the colour to her face, she was not to be aroused out of her scornful silence. Deeming it beneath her to answer, she calmly walked on, and reached the door. But, before she could leave the room, she heard other words which arrested her steps. Those words, however, came from her husband, not from her rival; words of wonderful import to the despairing wife, opening a new door of hope.

"I owe you many thanks, dear Elizabeth, for getting rid of that bold, bad woman," Alexander had said.

The Empress turned sharply round. A forlorn hope had sprung up within her: could it be that her husband, in his madness, had mistaken her person all the time?

"Hush!" said Anna, drawing closer to the Emperor, and whispering in his ears. "Do not exasperate her by speaking, or she will come back again. You see, she has turned round."

"I will not be silent!"

"You will drive her wild."

"What! Am I to be afraid of a lady-in-

waiting?" exclaimed Alexander violently: "one of your servants? And in my own palace too! No, Elizabeth, I will speak out."

"Hush!" said Anna, making a last attempt to silence that tell-tale tongue: "she is coming back."

And, indeed, the Empress was close to the bed again. She had seen through the trick at last. She fixed her honest eyes sternly on Anna, who for once quailed before that queenly look, and turned her eyes away.

"I must request your Highness to leave the room at once," Elizabeth said, calmly but firmly.

"Get out, you vile woman!" exclaimed the Emperor: "how dare you speak so to the Empress?"

"His Majesty's state will not permit me to leave him for the present," answered Anna.

She spoke with as much seeming carelessness as she could muster.

"Nay, then, I command your Highness to go," said the Empress with unmistakable energy.

Anna had been on the point of returning an insolent answer; but again she quailed before the unwonted firmness of tone and attitude which the Empress assumed.

"I must not," was all she could say.

"For your own sake I was unwilling to resort to force," said the Empress slowly and emphatically; "but now I must summon those who will remove you hence."

And she moved towards the bell-rope. Anna was somewhat frightened at last. She saw the false and critical position in which she stood. In a battle of force, she was sure to be beaten. Her strength lay in craft and skill. She tried to parley, and said :

"Stay, your Majesty !"

The Empress paused.

"Why don't you turn her out, Elizabeth ?" exclaimed Alexander, becoming more excited than ever. "Turn her out !"

"Are you willing," asked Anna, "to take on yourself the awful responsibility—— ?"

"I am not willing to discuss the matter with you," answered the Empress sternly.

And she went on to the bell-rope.

"Stay, your Majesty," said Anna, giving way at last : "I shall leave the room. It will never do to create a scene before the servants. I go ; but I throw all the responsibility on you."

The Empress was silent ; and Anna walked slowly toward the door. What a relief to the

outraged wife ! Alas, the relief was very short-lived ! When Alexander saw Anna walking away, he became dreadfully violent, and screamed with terror.

“ Stay, dear Elizabeth ! ” he cried. “ Don’t leave me alone with this wicked woman ! She will kill me ! ”

Anna stopped, and remained standing near the door, to watch the meeting between husband and wife.

“ Elizabeth is by your side, dear Alexander,” said the Empress tenderly, going up to the bed.

“ Avaunt, you wicked woman ! ” exclaimed Alexander : “ get out of my room ! ”

The Empress was perplexed. Yet it was an unspeakable comfort to find that her husband’s curses were addressed, not to her real self, but to the princess under her guise. She rejoiced, too, to think that Anna was gone at last. She was so absorbed in her husband, that she did not see her rival lingering near the door, and bent all her efforts to the task of soothing the Emperor. Alas, he would not be soothed ! Rising up in bed, he put forth all his strength—the strength of madness—and hurled the poor Empress to the floor.

Anna rushed up to Alexander, and uttered bitter, taunting reproaches against the poor fallen wife. The Empress, without deigning to answer her, rose and rang the bell ; and Anna, seeing matters come to that pass, and fearing a public and forcible removal, left the room at last. Not in despair, though : she felt sure, after what had taken place, that the Empress would not succeed in quieting Alexander ; and having some confidence in the Prime Minister's interference, she went in search of that worthy.

It was some time before she could find him ; but when she did, she lost no time in laying the case before him. Statement of the case not strictly truthful : not a word about Majesty's delusion ; Prime Minister simply led to understand that Majesty was wildly calling for his wife's removal from his chamber. Prime Minister greatly perplexed : anxious to please handsome coquette, and yet feeling it to be a serious thing to meddle with an empress in her own husband's room. But handsome coquette had cast her spell over him as over most ; and he yielded to her strong will at last, and followed her to the Emperor's room.

Before they had reached it, the noise which

issued thence told them that an exciting scene was going on within. They could hear the Emperor's voice, raised to the highest pitch, calling upon some one to "turn her out." When they entered the room, an appalling sight burst upon their view. Two men were holding Alexander down in the bed. He struggled to get out of their grasp; and his madness had given him such strength, that he had nearly overpowered the two, although they were both powerful men. The Empress stood a little way off, weeping, overwhelmed by the struggle of feelings within. Count Baranovitch went up to her, and said respectfully :

"It is your Majesty's presence that excites him."

"Nay," answered the Empress, glancing at Anna : "he mistakes me for her highness."

"Your Majesty had better retire till the mistake is rectified."

"That will be never !" thought Anna.

"How can the mistake be rectified if I keep away ?" asked Elizabeth.

"At least, it is nothing new," said Anna sarcastically.

"I beseech your Majesty to sacrifice your

feelings to his safety," urged the Prime Minister.

He spoke earnestly. With all his faults, he was devoted to Alexander ; and the sight of his suffering master touched him to the heart. All thought of merely pleasing Anna had vanished from his mind : at that moment he was simply anxious to do what was best for the Emperor himself. He saw no reason to believe that Alexander mistook the Empress for Anna : it was the sight of the Empress herself that excited him.

Elizabeth grew deadly pale. Was it indeed her feelings alone that stood in the way of her husband's safety ?

"If your Majesty remains here, he will die !" cried Anna insolently : "you are killing him !"

"I desire you to remove her highness hence," said the Empress, turning to Count Baranovitch.

"Nay, your Majesty, I dare not comply with your request," answered the Prime Minister : "because no one can soothe his Majesty so well as she ; and he is in such a fearful state of excitement, that we shall need her services."

Could anything add to the wretchedness of the heart-broken wife? She had never known before how utterly powerless she was; what a cipher she had become in her own husband's palace; into what contempt his behaviour had brought her in the eyes of their servants. What could she do? Nothing left her but to go away!

She cast a lingering look at her husband. His struggles had exhausted him, and he lay helpless on the bed. But, as soon as she approached him, he at once aroused himself, and seemed ready to re-enact the scene of violence. Poor Elizabeth's eyes again filled with tears, and her lips quivered with anguish as she turned to go away.

At this moment, her glance fell on a remarkably rough and common-looking being, who had just entered the room; so rough, indeed, and so common-looking, that Anna was wondering how such a man could have found his way into a palace. Figure, indeed, tall; but face as coarse and ugly as it could well be. High cheek-bones, straight and bristly hair, pug nose, amazingly flat and amazingly short, savoured of the Mongol race; but, on the other hand, square forehead, overhanging brow, deep

blue eyes, long, dense, hempen-coloured eyebrows, always in motion and bristling, pointed to a more European stock. He was badly dressed: clothes far from new; looked as if made for some other man, they sat on him so ill; and, at this time, much soiled and rumpled.

"Who is this ugly brute?" asked Anna in astonishment, loud enough for the "ugly brute" to hear.

"Hush, my child!" answered Count Baranovitch, whispering in Anna's ear: "that is his Imperial Highness, the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch!"

Did not Anna colour up? Did she not change her face, and mend her looks? What a false step to have taken!

It was indeed the Grand Duke Constantine, the Emperor's brother, supposed heir-apparent. But who could have guessed that he was so nearly akin to the gentle Alexander and the handsome Nicholas? And yet, who could doubt that he was the son of the Emperor Paul? The very image of his father, as far as ugliness went! Outwardly, one of the ugliest and coarsest-looking men in Europe. And inwardly? Well, perhaps we may see that, too, in time.

CHAPTER III.

THE GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE.

*"Sejanus. Thy follies now shall taste what kind of man
They have provoked."*

BEN JONSON: *Sejanus*.

FROM his earliest years, the Grand Duke Constantine had been a plague to all around him. Rough little cub that he was, he had won the good graces of his grandmother, the Empress Catherine ; and the old woman had petted and spoiled him to his heart's content. No one could ever persuade him to learn his lessons. Not a stupid lad, but stubborn and pig-headed. His tutor could make nothing of him. " Well, you can read," said the dogged little Grand Duke ; " and you are only the greater fool for it." A hopeful little sample of humanity !

Catherine had set her heart on his learning Greek : had her reasons for it, you see ; fond of playing Destiny, Providence. She had set up a finger-post at Cherson with this inscription : " The way to Constantinople." So, when she gave her second grandson the suggestive name of " Constantine," some shrewd folks read in

it: "The way to Constantinople." And when she insisted on his learning Greek, the same shrewd folks again thought there was no mistaking the meaning: "The way to Constantinople." But the pig-headed little Grand Duke would not rise to the level of his destiny: he hated Greek, and a hundred Constantinoples would not have reconciled him to the drudgery of learning it.

Indeed, to give him his due, he never had been very ambitious. A narrow, uncultured mind, that could not easily be made to cherish lofty schemes of any kind. There was one point, indeed, on which he *was* ambitious: he aspired to be commander-in-chief of the army. But even here his ambition was limited. He did not dream of conquest: otherwise the thought of "Constantinople" might have reconciled him even to the drudgery of learning Greek. Though he had distinguished himself on the field of battle, he was by no means fond of war. "I do not like war," he said: "it spoils soldiers, soils their accoutrements, and ruins discipline." In this speech, his real soul came out: what he loved was the pomp and parade and drill of an army. A strict martinet; stricter even than his brother

Nicholas. Happy the soldier who passed his glance unscathed ! But woe to the man whose dress was minus a button !

In his government of Poland, he was often frightfully severe. A hasty, savage, passionate nature : given to sudden gusts of rage, which no man durst face. Fitful, too, and whimsical : so that none could reckon on his mood for five minutes ; and few ever approached him without fear. But, with all that, not bad at heart : nay, under a rough outside and a harsh manner, hiding some generous qualities of soul. A man that bore no malice ; his gusts of anger passing away as suddenly as they came. A wild son of nature, he would at a moment's notice pass from the fierceness of a tiger to the gentleness of a lamb. When he had wronged a man, he would often bitterly rue the wrong, and make the best atonement in his power. At times, he was gentle and loving even to the verge of weakness.

One of the most beautiful qualities in him was his unbounded devotion to Alexander. The rough savage soul literally worshipped the gentle nature, and any day would have gladly laid down his life for his brother.

No chance for him to shine in his brother's presence ; and yet there was nothing which he regretted more than being so far from him. Not a touch of envy in his soul : his pride was to humble himself, that his nobler brother might be exalted. It was this devotion to Alexander that had brought him so suddenly from Poland at the present time. It so happened that he was at Pooltoosk (not far from Warsaw) on some army business, when he first heard of the Emperor's illness. "To Petersburg !" he said at once ; and, without going home for a change of clothes, or even taking any refreshment, he set out on the journey, and travelled day and night, as fast as post-horses could carry him.

When he arrived at the Winter Palace, he saw plenty to rouse his wrath. The Emperor's danger had thrown a deep gloom on all ; and, unhappily, the common grief had loosened the bands of discipline. Easy to guess, too, that the sudden appearance of the savage heir-apparent, who might so soon become the Emperor, was not likely to quiet people's minds. A panic in the palace ! Wherever he looked, he saw something wrong and out of place. As to buttons and such trifles, no longer to be

thought of! He was in a fearful rage, ready to find fault with everything he saw. The very strength of his devotion to his brother made him the more angry that any one should take advantage of that brother's illness. Useless to inquire how many floggings he ordered on his way to the sick-chamber; but it is only fair to mention that, in meting out chastisement, he had no respect of persons, and that several noblemen and gentlemen of the Court had a taste of his fury as well as servants and soldiers. He had as little scruple in kicking a prince as a peasant; and so he bestowed his favours right and left, and in fact kicked his way up to the room in which the Emperor lay.

When he entered the room, his rage was ready to vent itself on the first object it met. It so happened that the first person he saw was Anna: and he was not at all fascinated; was surprised to see such a person in his brother's room at such a time. Ah, if Anna had known who was entering the room, might she not have put on some of her most "fascinating looks?" Doubtful, though, whether even they would have passed muster with savage, eagle-eyed Imperial Highness. As

it was, she was caught unawares. In the meanwhile, the Empress had uttered a cry of joy, and stepped forward to welcome her brother-in-law. Oh, the comfort which his savage presence gave !

"My dear Constantine !" she exclaimed eagerly, holding out her hand : "I am so glad to see you !"

Constantine sank on one knee, and kissed her hand gallantly ; more gallantly than you would have expected from his rough appearance.

"Oh, your Majesty, how much you must have suffered !" he answered with deep feeling. "Believe me, I have felt for you. May the Lord comfort you !"

It was touching to hear such tender words and tones from so shaggy a man. Imperial Highness rose and walked up to the bed ; but Majesty was not in a state to recognise him. His struggles had worn him out ; and, as soon as the Empress turned to go away, he had become quiet, and soon dropped off to sleep. Constantine fell on his knees by the bedside, and, taking one of the thin white hands that lay on the bed-clothes into his own broad palms, covered it with kisses, and moistened it with tears.

"I think we had better go now," said Count Baranovitch, whispering in Anna's ear.

"I am going to stay," answered Anna.

"You had better come," answered the Prime Minister anxiously, foreboding mischief: "your game is up."

"What game?"

"You don't know how terrible his Imperial Highness can be."

"I don't fear him."

The fact was, Anna had begun to despise Constantine. Knowing nothing of deep self-sacrificing love herself, she thought that a man, who blubbered like a child over a sick brother, could not be a very dangerous enemy. So she had made up her mind to brave it out.

In the meanwhile, the Empress had approached the bed, and now stood by Constantine. Oh, the comfort and relief which that rough savage presence gave her!

"How kind it was of you to come!" she said, smiling sweetly on the savage.

"Do you think that I could have stayed away when I heard that *he* was ill?" answered Constantine.

He spoke in a reproachful tone of voice, and seemed quite hurt at the thought.

"But how was it that you were able to come so soon?" asked Elizabeth.

"I was at Pooltoosk when I first heard of his illness; and I set off at once, without even stopping to change my dress, as you may see. As soon as the horses were ready, I was off."

Elizabeth was touched. She took his big hand in hers, and said:

"Thank God you set off at once, Constantine! Otherwise I know not what would have become of me."

"Why, what was the matter, your Majesty?" asked Constantine, looking up to her with some surprise.

"There now!" exclaimed the Prime Minister, still whispering in Anna's ear. "You are going to catch it! Let us decamp before the storm descends! Come!"

"I won't stir," answered Anna doggedly.

"As you entered the chamber," continued the Empress, "I was leaving it—as I thought, for ever!"

"Why?"

"Because I would not share it with that—"

The Empress tried to say "lady." But she could not: her mouth would not form the word. She would not say "woman." So she

left the sentence unfinished. Imperial Highness might draw his own inference from that !

“Why did not your Majesty order her out, then ?” he asked very simply.

“I did, Constantine ; but his highness Count Baranovitch insisted on her staying in the room.”

“Hah !”

It would be hard to give you any idea of the awful savage force which Constantine managed to throw into that little word. Prime Minister grew very nervous : he knew what was coming. Even Anna was startled. As for the Empress, much as she longed to rid the room of that polluting presence, she was almost sorry that she had spoken of the past. Constantine had fired up at last. He sprang to his feet, and faced Anna and Count Baranovitch. The Prime Minister, foreseeing the storm which was coming, cunningly tried to turn aside its course, or at least to break its force. A very delicate operation at the best of times, but in the present circumstances well-nigh impossible !

“I wish you good health, your Imperial Highness,” he said, bowing very low.

“I thank you.”

Such a freezing tone !

"The sight of your Imperial Highness is enough to gladden one's heart, especially at such a time as this," continued Count Baranovitch, bowing very low again.

Very few hearts which that sight ever gladdened, it must be confessed: Prime Minister's, perhaps, as little as any. But at Court, you know, one must be a courtier! Constantine took no further notice of Prime Minister, but, turning to Anna, asked bluntly:

"And who are you?"

Prime Minister stepped forward and said:

"Will your Imperial Highness allow me to introduce her? Her highness Princess Donskaya."

"Donskaya? Donskaya? I do not remember any young princess of that name."

"She has been married since your Imperial Highness was in Petersburg last."

"And her husband?"

"Her husband is his highness Prince Igor Donskoy, captain in the Imperial Guards."

"A low, drunken, cowardly poltroon—is he not?" asked the Grand Duke, with a grim smile.

Prime Minister scarcely knew how to answer such an awkward question. Anna blushed up

to the temples. Constantine's words had cut like a sword. There was a long pause.

"I believe it must be the same," answered Count Baranovitch at length.

As if he had been, in the meanwhile, running over all the possible Prince Donskoys who could lay claim to the title of "a low, drunken, cowardly poltroon!"

"Ay, he *was* a captain in the Imperial Guards," continued Constantine, scowling all the time.

"I believe his highness still bears the rank," said Count Baranovitch.

"No, he does not," answered the Grand Duke, frowning ominously. "He is to be publicly degraded: I will see that it is properly done—the sneaking scoundrel!"

"Indeed!"

In fact, Prince Donskoy was one of those whom Constantine had found at fault, and had liberally pommelled and kicked, on his way to the sick-room.

"He was a disgrace to the Imperial Guards," he continued. "But how does his wife happen to be here, your Highness?"

"She was waiting on his Majesty."

"She is far too young and too handsome to

be a fitting nurse in such a place," answered the Grand Duke emphatically.

Anna smiled and began to breathe more freely. Had she caught *him* too? The terrible Constantine? She put on her sweetest looks, dropped a low curtsy, and said to Constantine :

"I humbly thank your Imperial Highness."

Constantine took no notice whatever of her coquettish approaches. Still frowning fiercely, he continued :

"If her Majesty thinks her a fitting personage for the office, of course I must hold my tongue ; because, so long as his Majesty remains incapable of commanding, her Majesty is the supreme authority in this place. Do you hear?"

"I hear, your Imperial Highness."

"But, certainly," the Grand Duke went on to say, "though she may be a fitting wife for that dastard of a Donskoy, I should not have thought her a fitting nurse for my brother."

There was a dead pause ; a dreadful pause. They could hear the clock ticking, and the Emperor breathing heavily. The Empress would not speak, out of pity to her humbled rival. Prime Minister could not speak : tongue having a strange tendency to cleave to the roof of his mouth. At length, he made a desperate

effort, and, after some failures, did manage to falter out the following words :

“Your Imperial Highness, there was no one else who could soothe his Majesty so well as she.”

“And how has she acquired such an influence over his Majesty?” asked Constantine.

“I believe nothing of the sort,” said the Empress, jealous of her right, and forced to speak in self-defence: “his Majesty, in his delirium, mistook her for me, and addressed her by my name; and I believe it was she herself that fostered the delusion in his Majesty’s mind.”

“That is not true!” cried Anna.

Constantine did not take the slightest notice of her, but went on to say to Elizabeth :

“I understand that your Majesty does not desire her presence in this chamber.”

“Certainly not.”

“I know that tastes differ,” continued Constantine sarcastically; “but I am heartily glad that your Majesty does not sanction the presence of such a creature.”

Now all this, bitter as it was, and hard for Anna to bear, showed a wonderful amount of forbearance and self-control on Constantine’s

part. Nothing but the presence of the stricken Emperor and the sorrowing Empress could have subdued his tone so much. At any other time, and in any other place, he would have stormed and raved. But there was nothing of the sort now. Though his words were bitter, his voice was low; and, though he was boiling with rage within, he was wonderfully quiet without. Prime Minister almost felt as if he had been a false prophet; as if Anna were to get off scot-free. Was this the terrible Constantine?

Better for Anna if she had let well alone, and retired at once. But she was so vexed at being spoken of in such terms (terms so new to the all-worshipped beauty), that she forgot her usual wariness, and uttered words which kindled the Grand Duke's smouldering wrath into a blaze.

"Prejudiced as your Imperial Highness is against me," she exclaimed angrily, "you might learn to address ladies——"

"When I come across *ladies*, I know how to address them," answered Constantine, still suppressing his wrath.

Even in that exciting moment, Anna had time to think that Count Golovin was the only

other gentleman who had ever denied her the title of "lady." And where was he now? Why, "nowhere!" She had driven him from office, and destroyed his power. The thought was encouraging: it emboldened her to grapple with the Grand Duke.

"Who would have thought," she said, "that two brothers could be so utterly unlike each other?"

And then it was that the explosion came. For one brief moment, Constantine fired up: his wrath was fierce and withering; and it came with a sudden shock on Anna's strong nerves. Better for her if she had bridled that sharp tongue of hers!

"Out, you shameless jade! Lady as you call yourself, and princess as you are by marriage, if ever you dare to enter this chamber again while his Majesty is ill, I will make the hangman see if there is any difference between your back and that of the meanest serf on your estate."

Dreadful as Constantine's words seemed, his voice and look were more dreadful still. Anna fled in dismay; and Count Baranovitch soon followed her.

CHAPTER IV. .

PEACE AT LAST.

"Clemanthe. Could'st thou think

I would be so divorced ?

Ion. Thou art right, Clemanthe :

It was a shallow and an idle thought.

'Tis past : no shadow of coldness frets us now ;

No vain disguise, my love."

TALFOURD : Ion.

WHEN Constantine was left alone with the Empress and the sleeping sufferer, he soon calmed down. After talking for a few minutes to his sister-in-law, he resumed his former station by the side of the bed. The Empress was touched to see the man who had just stormed so fearfully kneeling so quietly by her husband, and silently shedding tears over his wasted hands. Her thoughts flew back to the time, the blessed time (how many years ago !), when, a happy bride of fifteen, she used by turns to chaff and to fear the rough and fierce and clumsy lad of sixteen, and contrast him (ah, how unfavourably !) with his gentle and beautiful brother of seventeen, whom God had given her for her husband.

What events had taken place since then !

What tragedies ! And the two brothers ? There they were now : together, as of yore. But was not their relative worth somewhat changed in her view ? The “gentle and beautiful” had proved faithless ; and, though she had never ceased to love him, yet his career could scarcely have raised her estimate of human nature. And “the rough and fierce and clumsy,” whom she had laughed at, whom she had feared ? He had been true to her throughout. A gentler brother she might easily have had ; but a truer—never ! How much comfort she had found in him ; ay, in his very roughness, in his very fierceness, in his very clumsiness !

While she was indulging in this train of thought, a servant came in and spoke to the Grand Duke. Telling the Empress that he had some business to look after which might keep him away for hours, Constantine went out. Elizabeth took up the position which he had left. She took her husband’s wasted hand in her own, and covered it with kisses. She had not approached him so near for many a long day. It seemed like a renewal of olden times. And yet, how changed ! It was only while the owner was asleep that she could press

that hand: how much dearer to her now, in spite of all its owner's faults, what tongue could say? Weak to yearn after so faithless a husband? Alas, poor thing, she could not help it.

And, as she knelt there weeping, all her past life rose as a picture before her. And he, who had brought all this sorrow upon her, lay there before her, felled down by sickness, and hovering over the grave! Years ago she had forgiven him: her pulse still beat true to him. If that dear one, dear with all his faults, could only be restored to her! How often and how earnestly had she prayed for this! Hitherto her prayer had always been uttered in the loneliness of her own closet, with none but God to see her, with none but God to hear her. Never in *his* presence! Could she not pray with him? What use? Had God seen her? Had God heard her? Was not the question its own answer? If, after years and years of widowhood and sorrow, she had still to pray, had not her former prayers been wasted breath?

But here a voice whispered within, and uttered words which had often upheld her in the sorrowful years that were gone: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall

find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
. . . Or what man is there of you, whom
if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?
or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?
If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good
gifts unto your children, how much more shall
your Father which is in heaven give good
things to them that ask him?" These words
came with a new power to her soul. Why
should she not try it once more? And she
straightway lifted up her voice and prayed.
The voice was low and trembling; but her
articulation was clear, and every word she
uttered might have been heard by any one in
the room. She prayed for her husband, for
his life, for his soul's health, and, above all,
that they might be one again as they had been
in days of yore. In that prayer the anxiety
and sorrow and pain, which had been her life-
long portion, found tongue. All the tender-
ness and love, which she had been kept from
uttering to her husband for so many years, burst
out in one irresistible torrent of eloquent words.

When she began to pray, she fancied that
the hand which she had clasped in her own
moved gently; but it was a mere passing fancy,
which soon wore away as her whole soul became

absorbed in her prayer. But, when she became silent again, she could no longer doubt that there was a conscious response on the part of the dear invalid. The hand which she clasped returned her pressure gently. At the same time, a feeble voice fell on her ear :

“Come nearer, my noble wife : I am very weak.”

That name, which she had not heard from his lips for so many years, touched an inner spring which opened the floodgate of her feelings. She burst into tears, and, quickly rising, bent over the dear invalid.

“Oh, my husband ! my husband !” was all she could say.

“God bless you, my wife, for your noble forgiving spirit !” said the Emperor solemnly.

The Empress could contain herself no longer : the joy was too great to be kept in. She burst into a cry of triumph, while tears of joy streamed down her cheeks, and fell upon her husband’s face.

“‘Verily God hath heard me ; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer : blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor hid His face from me !’”

“These are blessed showers.”

"They are tears of joy, my husband," answered Elizabeth: "no more sorrow or pain for me!"

"May God in His mercy grant it!" exclaimed Alexander earnestly. "But have you fully forgiven me, Elizabeth?"

"Years ago."

"All?"

"Yes, all: years ago."

"Seal your forgiveness with a kiss."

The Empress imprinted a burning kiss upon her husband's lips. So they remained for some minutes. Alexander seemed too weak to stir: the fever was gone, and it had left him very feeble. There was a long silence, which was at length broken by the Empress.

"Thank God for this moment!" she said, lifting up her eyes.

The next moment she was sorry that she had broken the silence, because the Emperor now made an effort to speak, and she could plainly see that it was a hard effort.

"Elizabeth, my wife," he said, looking straight into her eyes, "I have sinned against you grievously."

"It is all forgiven and forgotten."

"Nay, my wife, I must confess my sins."

"Do not overcloud the present with the shadow of the past," answered Elizabeth earnestly. "'Let the dead bury its dead.'"

"Nay, but remember another passage, Elizabeth: 'Confess your faults one to another.'"

"But you *have* confessed."

"But not enough."

"Yes, Alexander!"

How strange, and yet how sweet, that name sounded on her lips!

"I never can confess enough."

"Life is not to be wasted in confession," answered the Empress: "life is for work."

The Emperor remained silent for a minute or two thinking, and then said: .

"Elizabeth, my wife, my greatest joy, at this moment, is to find that we are one at heart in a deeper and holier sense than ever before."

"Ay, husband, severed for a time, to be reunited at last, never to be severed again!"

"You are my true possession now," answered the Emperor; "because we are one for ever."

"Yes, for ever!"

"Doubtless, Elizabeth, our Heavenly Father has brought us to this point in different ways. Let me tell you in what way He restored my wandering soul to His fold."

"Not now : you are still very weak."

"Yes, now : who knows how soon my life may be cut off?"

"Alexander, give me the right of a wife over a sick husband : submit to my guidance for awhile, and go to sleep, while I watch over you with the holy angels of God."

"Be it so," answered Alexander, with a sweet smile : "I can deny you nothing, wife—yes, wife!"

It was not long before he fell asleep again, and his wife watched over him with feelings which were in the strictest sense unutterable. All was changed now. The sorrow, and the suffering, and the shame—all were gone. A new light seemed to shine in that palace. The very outward aspect of nature had changed ! The morning had been dull and dreary, but now the summer sun shone brightly in the sky. Those rays of light which came through the western windows : were they common sunbeams streaming from the setting sun ; or were they "the holy angels of God" watching with her over the dear one ?

The crisis was past ; and from that day the Emperor began to recover rapidly.

CHAPTER V.

THE PARTING.

"Fare thee well; and if for ever,
Still for ever fare thee well!"

BYRON: *Fare-thee-well.*

A FEW days after his interview with Count Golovin, Captain Maleenovsky went down to Doobeenovka to wind up his affairs, and bid farewell to the "souls" he had once owned. The solemn thoughts, which had come over him in connection with them when he first learnt the failure of his lawsuit, had never quite forsaken him. He longed to make them understand, before he parted with them for ever, how sorry he was that he had not done the whole of his duty by them.

But he and his "souls" differed in opinion on that point. While his conscience charged him with failure of duty, they were bitterly bewailing his loss as one of the kindest masters they had ever heard of. A good many of them could boast "that he had never once laid violent hands (or feet) upon them." A few went so far as: "not even an angry word." The

thought of falling into the hands of the brutal Prince Ilinsky was dreadful to these simple souls. Wherever Captain Maleenovsky went, he was greeted with smiles, and followed with tears. And, when, at last, he went away, there was such a scene of weeping and wailing as had not been heard of in the neighbourhood. Vanka begged hard to accompany him to Petersburg. But Captain Maleenovsky resolutely refused: he must learn to shift for himself now. All success to the attempt!

On his way back to Petersburg, his thoughts turned very much on the state of his country. His own troubles led the way. In this country it is believed that the possession of property, what is called "a stake in the country," fits a man for the exercise of political rights. It was the *loss* of his property that first led Captain Maleenovsky's thoughts into a political channel. He was no mean thinker: but he was only a young man; and, up to this time, science, philosophy, literature, and art, had absorbed all his thoughts. But, now that he himself had suffered wrong, he began to ask *why* there should be so much injustice and corruption in Russia. What was the root of the mischief? What the remedy?

not answer the questions ; but he resolved to consult Count Golovin as the greatest statesman he knew.

A few days after his return from Doobee-novka, he awoke rather late one morning, and hastened to dress ; as he had to be on parade by a certain hour, and meant after parade to call on Helen Cameron for the last time. He was so unaccustomed to dress himself, was so dependent on Vanka's services as valet, that he felt nearly helpless. Unluckily he could not find one of his bracers ; and, when, after much searching and waste of time, he had laid his hands on it, he saw that one of the buttons to which it ought to have been fastened was gone. Well, these were small annoyances ; but it is not always the biggest creatures whose stings and bites are the most teasing. He bore them without a murmur. But he felt the loss of Vanka in a thousand ways. Vanka was such a handy fellow : "Jack of all trades," though by no means "master of none." Captain Ma-leenovsky had never known his worth till he had lost him. No one could keep his rooms so tidy. No one could prepare his breakfast so well. No one could forestall his wishes so promptly. He had of course given up his

lodgings, and lived only in the barrack now ; and the soldier, who waited on him when he wanted waiting on, was not fit to hold a candle to Vanka. Captain Maleenovsky thought of all this as he entered his sitting-room this morning ; and his thoughts naturally shaped themselves into spoken words.

“ Ah, Vanka, I never knew all thy worth when thou wast with me ! ” he exclaimed.

“ Here I am, your honour, ” answered Vanka *in propria persona* : “ what is your honour’s will this morning ? ”

Captain Maleenovsky stared at the young man. Only a few days before he had left Vanka at Doobeenovka. And, yet, there he was, dusting the room, and evidently feeling quite at home, his rough honest face beaming with joy ! How could he have got there ? The captain asked :

“ What art thou doing here ? ”

“ Tidying the room up a bit, ” answered Vanka coolly. “ That lubber of a soldier is a dunderhead ! He doesn’t know his business. But I have sent him to the right-about. ”

“ But how camest thou here ? ” asked Captain Maleenovsky : “ I left thee at Doobeenovka. ”

Vanka pretended to misunderstand the question, and said promptly :

"I came by the diligence."

And he bustled about, and set things in order, as if he had never left the captain at all.

"I mean, how camest thou to be here at all?" explained the captain. "What is thy business here?"

"To wait upon your honour, of course. The breakfast is ready: shall I serve it up?"

"Thou art a provoking fellow, Vanka!" cried Captain Maleenovsky almost angrily.

"I wish you would twist my ears a bit, baarin!" said Vanka with moist eyes: "it would look like old times. It seems so queer for you to be vexed without striking me. There isn't a bell-rope about; but you might just pinch my ears a bit."

I think Vanka loved to tease his old master "a bit." Captain Maleenovsky felt the force of his appeal to the past: his rising anger vanished in a moment. He asked :

"But who sent thee here?"

"My new master."

"Your new master sent thee here to wait on me?"

"Yes, baarin."

Captain Maleenovsky was quite bewildered.

"What! Prince Ilinsky?"

"I did not say Prince Ilinsky."

"But is not Prince Ilinsky thy master?"

"No, your honour."

"What dost thou mean?"

"Prince Ilinsky was my master," answered Vanka; "but, thank God, he is not my master now."

"Vanka, thou art provoking me beyond endurance!" exclaimed Captain Maleenovsky, losing all patience: "why canst thou not speak out, and come to the point at once?"

"Do twist my ears, baarin! Just a little bit: just to remind one of old times, you know."

Appeal again not lost.

"Who is thy master now, Vanka?"

"His highness, Count Golovin."

"Count Golovin!"

"Yes, no one else, your honour, I assure you," answered Vanka gravely, as if Captain Maleenovsky had doubted his word. "He bought my mother, my brothers, and myself, from his highness, Prince Ilinsky; and he has given us such a pretty little house to live in at the bottom of his garden. There's a man for

you ! Call him a good man ? Oh dear no ! not a bit."

"I heartily congratulate thee, Vanka, on escaping from the clutches of Prince Ilinsky," said Captain Maleenovsky warmly. "But what is thy business at Count Golovin's ?"

"To wait on your honour."

"On me ?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Now, do be explicit for once, Vanka."

"I will, your honour—since you won't condescend to pinch my ears. You might, though, just a little : it won't be like the same thing, you see."

"But about Count Golovin ?"

"Yes, your honour. You see, his highness soon found out that I had some taste for gardening. So what does he do but appoint me one of his under-gardeners ? But says he to me : 'Vanka,' says he, 'this is a mere nominal appointment. Thou art not wanted in the garden,' says he ; 'and thy real business will be to wait on thy late master. When he has nothing for thee to do, thou mayest come here, and work in the garden ; but go thou early in the morning,' says he, 'and tell him with my compliments that thou art to take thy orders

from him.' Oh, baarin, there's a man for you!"

Captain Maleenovsky was touched.

"He is a noble man!" he cried.

"But that is not all, baarin. Says he: 'Thou art to go there every day of the year, and every year of thy life,' says he, 'till thy old carcass can travel no more!"

"Well, I will speak to him about it."

"He lives in such a grand palace of a house; and do you know, your honour, such a nice English barishnia came in and had a talk with my mother."

Captain Maleenovsky's heart throbbed: could the English barishnia be Helen Cameron?

"What English barishnia?"

"They call her Maria Ivanovna: she is the English governess in Count Golovin's family."

"Oh!"

Such a take in!

"And what do you think, your honour! She actually brought her highness, the princess, to visit my mother."

"Who is her highness, the princess?"

"Count Golovin's lady," answered Vanka.

"Oh, such a beauty! Looks like wax-work."

The highest compliment which Vanka could pay.

Having paid his compliment, Vanka brought in the breakfast ; and his old master once more enjoyed the luxury of being waited upon by a regular valet. His missing button was on in a trice ; and, under Vanka's skilful handling, his dress looked ever so much trimmer than before.

But Captain Maleenovsky had no time to waste over his breakfast. He despatched it quickly, and went on parade. I fear he scarcely did justice to himself there. His mind was full of his coming interview with Helen Cameron. As soon as parade was over, he wended his steps to Pea Street.

It was a hard task he had undertaken. Was he equal to it? Perhaps. Not a man of exalted virtues, by any means ; nay, with many faults, some of which we have already detected, and may yet see others. But, at any rate, a strong man, who thought he could carry out a purpose at any cost. Ay, but what if a strong temptation should come from without, to baffle the strength of will within ?

The strong temptation did come. When he reached Mr. Cameron's house, he was told

that Helen was walking in the garden. Thither he went. The garden was now in full bloom; in its richest summer dress. Perhaps it scarcely deserved the praise he had given it, even in its winter clothing; but, though not "the loveliest spot in St. Petersburg," not coming up to the Summer Garden for one thing, it was nevertheless a lovely spot. Lovely enough to justify a lover's strong words.

There he found Helen Cameron—alone. Miss Meldrum had gone out for the day; and Helen, taking advantage of her absence, had given herself a holiday from her studies. There she stood—a very queen for beauty. She had no hat or bonnet on her head; and her rich golden hair, which came down in thick clusters of curls all round, fluttered in the breeze. Her lovely face was radiant; all aglow with love and joy. As soon as she saw Captain Maleenovsky, she eagerly darted forward to meet him, and held out her hand.

Here was temptation for a man! Captain Maleenovsky was fairly dazzled. He had never seen Helen look so beautiful before. In the best of health, too: all anxiety gone; all thought of a voyage to England abandoned for the present. In the highest of spirits,

too : gayer and sprightlier than she had been in her best days. How carry out his purpose ? How throw away such a treasure ? Ah, it was a time to put the strongest man to the test. He was not wholly proof against it. He dallied with his purpose : would taste some rich crumbs of comfort, before he threw away the cake. Pity him : he was but a man.

A conversation followed, warm enough, without reaching the verge of avowed love. Captain Maleenovsky was sinking deeper and deeper into the mire. At length he said :

“Mademoiselle, I have to thank you for the pleasantest hours I ever spent in all my life.”

“I am heartily glad of it,” answered Helen, with her usual frankness ; “and, now that the summer season has come, I hope you will spend many still pleasanter hours—in ‘the loveliest spot in St. Petersburg,’ ” she added archly.

Could he refrain from falling at her feet, and offering her his heart and his hand ? He did, though. The very strength of the temptation had startled him. Ah, wretched trifler ! Was he not dallying with his purpose ? Was that the way to achieve success ? The right hand *must* be cut off : be a man, and do it ! Such were his thoughts.

"Ah, mademoiselle, it is sad to think of," he said; "but I must learn to be a stranger to 'the loveliest spot in St. Petersburg.'"

"Indeed!" answered Helen, laughing. "Are you entrusted with a mission to China? Or are the Guards going out to fight the French again?"

Captain Maleenovsky was silent for a few minutes. The struggle within him was becoming desperate. Helen could see nothing of it in his face: it looked as massive and immovable as ever.

"I am a poor man now," thus he expressed the issue of the struggle; "and it does not become me to associate on equal terms with the rich."

"Nonsense!" cried Helen; "so long as a man is a scholar and a gentleman, he is welcome anywhere."

The struggle was renewed in Captain Maleenovsky's mind. Clear enough that Helen thought him welcome! Why not avail himself of her welcome? Why not pursue her in spite of her father? He hurled the temptation from him. I do not suppose he had any definite religious views as yet. But he expressed himself in religious language — perhaps to

adapt himself to Helen's religious training.

"We are taught to pray: 'Lead us not into temptation,'" he said. "But can we sincerely utter the prayer, if we eagerly rush into temptation ourselves?"

Helen understood what he meant well enough: that, if he visited her, he would be tempted to fall in love with her too deeply. The answer was on her lips; a clear unanswerable answer, as she thought. But how utter it? He had not yet openly avowed his love; and, like a diplomatist, who knows all about an affair, but, not having received "official communications," is forced to be dumb, she held her tongue.

Better, perhaps, if Captain Maleenovsky had been more open with Helen; if he had told her of her father's refusal to sanction his pretensions to her hand! Still, his only motive for silence was the wish to spare Helen's own feelings. If he openly avowed his love, would not Helen take more deeply to heart the severment that must ensue? But, in the meanwhile, he forgot that he was placing her in a false position. She felt that false position keenly. She could not speak out on what he spoke of

with a very thin disguise: could not right herself with him, or with her father. How could she fight his battles or her own without an "official communication?" For all that, it was unworthy of her to answer him as she actually did.

"Have you an itching palm for silver spoons?" she said, laughing.

Not a butterfly yet, you see. No longer a grub, one would hope: most likely in the transition state.

Captain Maleenovsky looked at her wistfully. Did he too think the answer unworthy of Helen Cameron? She could not judge from his impassive face. She longed to know; for scarcely had she given wings to her thought before she regretted it herself. She watched for his rejoinder, hoping to read his opinion there. Here it was:

"Ah, mademoiselle, there is something more precious than silver spoons, which one may be tempted at times to steal."

Rejoinder enigmatical: at least Helen could come no nearer to his opinion of her answer. By way of apology, she said:

"I am sure that *you* will never do anything dishonourable."

"I trust not ; and, therefore, mademoiselle, I have come to bid you farewell. I sincerely hope you will soon forget that there is such a person as Alexander Maleenovsky in this strange, disjointed, wrongful world."

A few words of farewell were spoken before Captain Maleenovsky took his leave. He looked cold and impassive : he had gotten the victory over himself ; and he made the parting as formal as it could well be. Helen could not have gathered from his appearance and manner how deeply the iron was entering his soul.

And Helen ? Was she heart-broken ? Not a bit of it. She had faith in him : she was quite sure now that he loved her ; and she had not a doubt that all would come right in the end. Poverty sever two loving hearts ? Pshaw ! Only it was provoking that he should not have spoken out more openly ! How was she to carry on the campaign against her father ? No "official communication : " no *locus standi* at all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLOOD.

"Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!"

COWPER: *On the Loss of the Royal George.*

THE bearing of rivers on great cities would form a curious subject of investigation. There are few cities which do not owe at least some of their greatness to the streams on whose banks they stand. What would London have been without the Thames? But perhaps there is no city in the world which is prouder of its river than St. Petersburg; and, to hear the people talk of it, you would think that the Neva is as needful to their well-being as the Nile was to that of the old Egyptians. Certainly a beautiful river, winding majestically through the city for half a dozen miles, and adorning every point it touches; supplying the people with plenty of fish, and the purest of water in a spot where all the wells hitherto sunk have yielded nothing but a dirty yellow fluid which one would scarcely

touch even when dying of thirst in the Great Desert.

But there is a drawback ; as preachers tell us there is to everything good in this world. "No rose without its thorn ; no sunshine without its cloud ;" and so forth. Well, the Neva having wisely made up its mind to be no exception to the rule, pricks the Petersburgers with a very big thorn in their side, and overshadows them with a very black and threatening cloud. Every now and then it takes it into its head to overflow its banks, and destroys property and life in a frightful way. There are many who maintain that the floods, which have hitherto overwhelmed the city, are only earnest of a far more dreadful catastrophe which will come some day ; and there are philosophers who say that, if three natural phenomena, each of which is common enough by itself, should happen to take place at the same time, the beautiful city of the Tzars will be blotted out of the map of Europe.

It seems that Peter the Great had been warned of the danger before he built his new city. While he was laying the foundation, it is said that he saw an old tree marked round the trunk several feet above the ground, and

asked a Finnish peasant what the mark meant. "It is the height to which the flood rose in 1680," answered the man. The enthusiastic Tzar flew into a rage: *he* was not going to be thwarted by an old woman's tale. It was the old story of King Canute and the waves. "You lie!" said Majesty: "it is not possible." And with his own hand he cut down the warning tree; and—St. Petersburg was built! But it was very "possible" for all that. The wrath of the Tzar did not change the habit of the waters. They were as little inclined to obey Tzar Peter as King Canute. During his life, indeed, the river seemed to respect his beautiful handiwork. But, scarcely was he laid in the grave, when the floods began, and followed one another with dreadful speed.

The authorities of St. Petersburg have become so used to these floods, that measures are taken to warn the people of their danger as soon as the river rises above its customary level. A cannon is fired from the Admiralty, and flood signals hoisted on every steeple. If the flood is a slight one, the warning is repeated only once an hour till the danger is over. When the river is high enough to lay the lowest streets under water, the alarm-gun is

fired every quarter of an hour ; and, according as the river rises, the iron voice grows fiercer and more pressing, till, at last, guns are fired every minute as a cry of despair.

Never yet had the river risen to such a height as on the 7th of November of this year: a few months after the Emperor's recovery from the illness which had threatened his life. A fierce west wind had been blowing all night, and grow in strength throughout the day. It forced the waters of the Gulf of Finland into the Neva, and drove the river back into the city. The water rose quietly enough at first ; but, at the next high tide, it came flowing up the streets with a rush and a roar which were awful. Almost the whole city was under water ; and still the river continued to rise. The alarm-guns were firing away every five minutes, warning the people that the danger was very great. And still the water rose. It burst in mighty cataracts through the windows into the houses: it tore up the bridges, whirled off horses and carriages, and washed away some of the houses.

At the first approach of danger, the Emperor had gone to the balcony of the Winter Palace, which overlooks the Neva. The Empress and the

Empress-mother were with him, together with Count Baranovitch and a good many of the courtiers. Alexander looked well, considering that he had been at death's door only a few months before, and was evidently happier than he had been for a long time. But he still bore traces of his late illness; and, in spite of the cheerfulness which was now growing into a habit with him, it was with saddened heart that he watched the destruction of so much property and the suffering of so many men and women.

The view from the balcony of the Winter Palace was grand. Across the water stood the sombre fortress, with the beautiful Summer Garden behind. Farther on was the Exchange, with its prows of ships cast in bronze, its massive columns rising more than a hundred feet from the ground, and its stately flights of granite steps leading down to the water. The majestic Neva flowed between them and the Winter Palace; but, instead of flowing down to the Gulf of Finland, as it usually does, it was now rushing madly upward toward its source. It looked swollen and angry, and pushed past the Winter Palace with a roar which seemed to hint that it was quite impartial in its rage, and would respect the Em-

peror's palace no more than the meanest peasant's hut. On its tost and seething bosom it bore wrecks of every kind : bridges and rafts of wood ; bales of merchandise ; sheep, cattle, horses, and other household animals, struggling in the torrent ; and boats of all shapes and sizes, some of them sinking under the crowds of living men and women who had sought refuge in them. A scene not easily forgotten !

"What a sight !" exclaimed the Empress, straining her pitiful eyes over the wide expanse of water.

"It reminds me of the flood we had at the end of last century," said the Empress-mother.

"But that was nothing like so terrible as this, your Majesty," said Count Baranovitch.

"It is a judgment from heaven for our sins !" cried the devout Alexander, lifting his eyes.

Strangely enough, the Emperor shared this opinion with the meanest of his subjects. The rabble in the streets also looked upon the flood as a judgment from heaven : only, according to their "theory of the universe," taken from the more ignorant and bigoted of the priests, it was the Emperor himself that had brought down the judgment by his coquetries with

foreign heresies and his tamperings with the orthodox faith. He had but lately recovered from a deadly sickness; and now another calamity, more fearful still, was overwhelming him. Of course it was a judgment for his sin: what could be more logical or more clear? Potato-rots clearly traceable to Maynooth Grants! Towers of Siloam falling on guilty Galileans! Beautiful "theory of the universe!"

"But can nothing be done to save the poor creatures?" asked the Empress, still gazing upon the river.

"I remember they said that nothing worth doing was possible the last time," said the Empress-mother.

"Ay," answered Count Baranovitch, "the attempt would be dangerous: you see, it is none but the rabble that are afloat; and certainly they are not worth the risk."

The Empress Elizabeth cast on him one of her steadfast earnest looks, which said so much and so quietly. Prime Minister never a favourite with Majesty: least of all since he had done his best to give her a rival in Alexander's heart.

"Not worth the risk!" repeated the Empress slowly, and with a tremor of indignation in her

tone: "I wonder what the 'friend of publicans and sinners' would have said to that."

"I mean to say, your Majesty, that it would not be worth while to sacrifice noble lives for them."

"The noblest gave his for the meanest."

"Would to God that I could save them at any risk!" exclaimed the Emperor, with a thrill of enthusiasm.

"I know what you are capable of doing," answered the Empress-mother, gazing proudly at her eldest-born.

"I would gladly give my life for them."

"God forbid!" cried Count Baranovitch.

He was seriously alarmed at that outburst of enthusiasm. He too knew what Majesty was "capable of doing." Capable of doing rash things, you see. Capable of making good his word.

Majesty did nothing rash just then. But he fell on his knees, and, lifting up his hands toward heaven, gave utterance to an earnest prayer.

When he had finished his prayer, there was dead silence for a while. All were deeply impressed: even Count Baranovitch was touched; and, as for the Empress, she was sobbing

audibly. Did she think of that other prayer which had risen from the same Winter Palace some months before? Was not the one the child of the other?

The silence was at length broken by cries of distress and prayers for help, which came from the river. All looked out eagerly, and saw a huge mass floating past the Winter Palace.

"Why, surely, that is a house floating up the river!" said the Emperor, greatly excited.

And, sure enough, it was a house, a wooden house, which had been lifted up from its foundations, and was now sailing along without going to pieces. It was still tenanted by its usual inmates: they crowded the windows, and uttered the most harrowing cries for help. A sight to move a heart of stone!

"Merciful God!" cried the Empress: "this is fearful! Can nothing be done to save them?"

"I can endure this no longer!" said Alexander, rising in great excitement: "I must go and succour my people."

"It would be madness to attempt it," answered Count Baranovitch: "your Majesty can do them no good; and you will only peril your precious life."

Prime Minister seriously alarmed. Majesty

quite "capable" of risking his life for others. Had not the Royal Humane Society of England awarded him its gold medal one year for saving a poor peasant from drowning? Prime Minister, with all his faults, devoted to Majesty.

"What if I do?" asked the Emperor.

"Let me beseech your Majesty not to venture out at such a time as this!" pleaded the count.

Alexander was touched by the old man's devotion; but he remained firm in his resolve.

"Thanks for your zeal, my old friend," he replied; "but there is a duty more sacred than that which I owe myself."

The Prime Minister fell on his knees before the Emperor, and made a last desperate appeal.

"Your Majesty has surely not forgotten what I told you some months ago about the plans of the *Union*. Let me beseech you, as you would avert a revolution from the country, which, at this moment, would be specially disastrous——"

"Nay, peace, old friend! The issue is in God's hands! I can calmly entrust the future to Him. He will watch over Russia. There is only one thought which could restrain me at this moment: my life has been more precious

to me the last few months than ever before. I owe it to you, Elizabeth; and you are the only arbiter of my destiny. What say you: shall I go, or shall I not?"

Alexander looked tenderly at the Empress; but she did not answer him for some moments. She grew deadly pale; there was a dire struggle within. The life so dear to her, so much dearer than ever—the life which had been so lately rescued from the jaws of death—could she surrender it, or even consent to its being risked? Nature cried loudly against it. But there was a still small voice within, to which she had long been wont to listen, whose softest whisperings could drown the loudest calls of nature. That voice made itself heard now. The struggle was sharp, but happily it was brief. She spoke; and her voice, though "soft and low," was clear and firm, and rang like the trumpet-call of duty through Alexander's soul.

"Go: go like a hero as you are!"

"Spoken like yourself, my noble wife!" cried Alexander, folding her to his heart.

"God forbid that any selfishness of mine should turn you away from the call of duty!" continued the Empress earnestly, speaking

like one inspired. "None can take your place here; none can assure the hearts of your people as you can."

"I hope there will not be much danger, my dearest," answered the Emperor.

He wished to reassure his wife; but she needed no such comfort. She had higher support than that. He who has a rifle to defend him does not need a bow and arrow.

"If there should be," she said firmly, "God can preserve you on the water as well as on the dry land; but, if you perish, it will not be long before I follow you."

Will she remember this saying a twelve-month hence?

"Farewell, then, dearest!"

"Farewell! May God keep you in the hollow of his hand!"

He clasped her to his heart; and so they parted.

The effort had been almost too much for the poor Empress. Her health was delicate; and, as soon as the Emperor disappeared, she burst into tears. The weakness, however, did not last long; and, when she rallied, she retired to her oratory, and spent the whole evening in prayer.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUCCOUR.

"Some succour yet they could afford ;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delayed not to bestow."

COWPER: *The Cast-away.*

THE Emperor forthwith planned a systematic succour. Gathering a number of brave men around him, he divided them into several bands, each under the control of a leader whom he appointed. He brought together as many boats as could be got, and sent them with help into all parts of the city. Buttoning himself up in a rough sailor's coat for the sake of handiness as well as warmth, he embarked in one of those boats, and visited the spots where the danger was the greatest. By nature romantic and fond of adventure, and with his wife's noble words still ringing in his ears, he ran the greatest risks. His welcome presence brought a new element into each of the awful scenes he visited. He addressed words of comfort and encouragement to all; words which came from the

heart, and went to the heart. The very sight of their Emperor sharing their dangers reassured the people's heart.

But could this be the same Alexander whom we saw moping in his cabinet not many months before? This man in the rough sailor's jacket; this man so cheery, so hearty, so active, so full of resource;—could it be indeed the same? Yes, the very same; and not so much changed either. True, his reunion with his wife had given him a new lease of life. But, apart from that, he was naturally “capable of doing” all that he was doing now. *This* was in him as well as *that*. He, like most of us, had two sides to his nature: looked at from one side, a weak sentimentalist; looked at from the other, a born hero.

In the course of this strange voyage of deliverance through the streets of St. Petersburg, the Emperor had to steer down a lane at the back of Count Golovin's house. A small, low house stood in that lane; and, as they rowed past, cries of distress came from the inmates. The house had but two stories; and at the window of the upper storey stood a poor woman with two boys by her side.

The house itself seemed tottering, and could not have held out much longer. Unhappily, the Emperor's boat was already full; and it became a nice point whether it were true charity to risk losing all for the sake of saving a few. As the boat was passing, the woman, who was Vanka's mother, Avdottia by name, cried out, as loud as her voice would allow :

"Save us, good people! Or, *save my children at least!*"

Alexander could not resist that mother's appeal.

"Stop, all!" he said.

"We have already as many as the boat will carry, your Majesty," remarked one of the rowers.

This was Ilyah, or Elijah, the Emperor's head coachman: a fine, tall, stout old fellow, who had driven Majesty so many years, and talked to him so often and so freely, that he could speak out his mind pretty plainly. A brave old fellow, who would any day have given his life for his master, but did not like to see that master's life endangered.

"He speaks the truth, your Majesty," said another of the crew, seconding Elijah.

"I cannot bear the thought of leaving them to perish there!" answered Alexander.

"If there are many in the house, we can't take them all in," Elijah persisted.

A mother's ears are quick, where her children are concerned. Avdottia must have overheard this talk, or at least part of it. She cried out:

"Save my children, and leave me to perish. And thou, good man," she continued, addressing the Emperor, "thou that art so kind-hearted, be sure that thou shalt not go unrewarded. We belong to the great Count Golovin, the late chief of the secret police: he is a good man, and will reward thee liberally. Save my children!"

Clear enough that she did not know who Alexander was. Intelligible, too, Avdottia being a recent importation from the country. Indeed, some of the Petersburgers found it hard to recognise him at this moment. Majesty not distinguishable by his dress from the rest of the relieving party; and, in the growing dusk of the evening, any marks of higher breeding in the face, not easily discernible. Moreover, it would never have entered Avdottia's head, that the great

White Tzar went about saving lives in this fashion.

"How many of you are there?" asked the Emperor.

"Only myself and my two boys."

"We'll take you in."

"The Lord bless thee, good man!" said Avdottia. "I could fall on thy neck and kiss thee."

"Take care!" Elijah cried suddenly; "the house will be down upon us, if we don't mind."

And, indeed, it was scarcely safe to approach the house. The water had so undermined the walls, that they were beginning to bulge out ominously.

"Nonsense, Elijah," answered Alexander playfully. "I think thou art becoming an old fool."

"I would gladly become an old woman to save your Majesty from danger. The Lord preserve us!"

"Nay, I think thou art that already; else why so fearsome?" rejoined the Emperor. "If we stand at such trifles we shall save no more lives to-day."

And Alexander steered the boat to the side

of the house. But, for all his banter, he felt that many an unlikelier thing might happen than the catastrophe which Elijah foreboded.

"Take care, your Majesty!" repeated the old coachman. "Not too near; this wall is giving way already."

Now Avdottia had heard Alexander addressed as "his Majesty;" but she naturally guessed that it was a nick-name given to the old sailor, and never dreamt for a moment that the great White Tzar was there in person.

Alexander stood up in the boat, and, holding up his arms, said to Avdottia:

"Throw the children down to me."

But his arms did not reach the spot where the mother stood.

"I am afraid thou wilt not catch them," she answered anxiously, holding up her youngest.

"Never fear, good woman!"

"Now, good man, if thou should'st hurt a hair of his head, thou wilt have to answer for it," continued Avdottia in her motherly anxiety: "his highness is a great man; and he will see me righted."

"Be quick," answered the Emperor; "or this house will tumble down before thou art out of it."

This fresh fear quickened Avdottia's movements. She threw down the boy ; and Alexander caught him safely, and placed him in Elijah's hands. The other boy was handed down next ; and, last of all, the Emperor caught the mother herself in his arms, and seated her in the boat.

As long as the danger lasted, Avdottia could think of nothing but her boys ; but, as soon as they were safe in the boat, other thoughts entered her thrifty head.

"O my tables and chairs!" she cried, wringing her hands : "my best Sunday gown : my commode full of linen : my son's new livery!"

"Good woman, thank God that thou and thy children are safe !" said the Emperor seriously. "Never mind the things : I will make up to thee what thou hast lost."

Avdottia stared at "the old sailor."

"Thou make up?" she exclaimed. "But it is too bad to scold him when he has just saved me and my children," she said to herself. Then she continued aloud, more gently : "I thank thee all the same, good man. No doubt thou meanest well : but the count is very kind ; and he'll see that I don't want. One's own shirt is next one's own skin."

It was the Emperor's turn to be astonished.

"Count Golovin kind!" he cried: "I have always understood that he was harsh and cruel."

Avdottia fired up in a moment.

"It's a lie!" she said; "and thou should'st be ashamed of thyself for repeating it, thou knave. Thou art old enough, if thou art not wise enough, to know better."

"Dost thou know who it is thou art talking to?" asked Elijah.

He was about to tell Avdottia who Alexander was: but the Emperor, being in a merry humour, winked at him; and he as well as the rest of the crew, understanding the sign and relishing the fun, kept Alexander's secret.

"No, I don't," answered Avdottia; "and, what's more, I don't *care*. Whoever he be, even if he were a nobleman, which isn't likely, he shouldn't tell lies about the baarin."

"I was merely repeating what I had heard others say, my good woman," said the Emperor.

"But thou should'st be ashamed of thyself—an old fellow like thee, who ought to know better—I say, thou should'st be ashamed of thyself for repeating lies like that! It's well my son Vanka didn't hear thee; or he would have punched thy old head for thee—that he

would !—But forgive me, good man : I ought not to be so angry with thee after thou hast saved my children and me. Thou hast put me quite into a passion, I declare ! I can't bear to hear the kindest and best of men slandered like that."

And Avdottia burst into tears.

"Nay, good woman, I am glad to see thee defend thy master so bravely," answered Alexander gently. "He can't be quite so bad as he is made out to be—that's clear. But how is it he has got such a reputation ?"

"I'll tell thee how ; though I don't know much of him, having been lately bought. Our baarin can't abide wrong-doing ; and he's hard on the bad—that's how it is. And I'll tell thee what, old man : if thou dost not make thy tongue wag to better purpose, thou may'st chance to have a taste of the rougher side of him, I can tell thee. He has a long head as well as a long arm ; and there's no man in Russia knows better what is going on about him."

"What !" exclaimed the Emperor, highly amused : "not even his Majesty the Tzar ?"

"The Tzar !" cried Avdottia : "the Lord give him long life ! Bless thee, old man, the

Tzar doesn't know half so much of what's going on as our baarin does. Better for him if he did! They say, he sits moping in his room all day; and it stands to reason that he shouldn't know so much as the baarin, who is here, there, and everywhere."

"Dear me!"

There was a loud burst of laughter in the boat.

"Why, my good man, even I could tell our little father, the Tzar, something that would make him stare."

"What is that?"

"Dost thou take me for a fool?" asked Avdottia. "I'm going to tell *thee*?" she added scornfully.

"But if I were to bring thee to the Tzar, would'st thou tell him then?"

"*Thou!* If I wanted to speak to the Tzar, I should ask our baarin.—But dost thou think he knows that thy comrades take his sacred title in vain, and call thee 'Majesty?'"

Avdottia fancied that this would prove a settler for "the old sailor."

"I shouldn't wonder if he does."

There was another burst of laughter in the boat. Avdottia was nettled.

"You need not laugh, my good fellows," she said: "if our little father, the Tzar, should chance to hear of it, you will laugh the wrong side of your mouths, I can tell you; and, now that I find you so disrespectful, I don't know but what I'll go and tell our baarin of it."

"But would he tell our little father, the Tzar?" asked the Emperor with an anxious look.

Another peal of laughter.

"Do, pray, forgive us, my good woman!" said Elijah with mock earnestness: "remember we have saved you and your children. We are lost men if you peach against us."

Elijah was a merry old soul, and entered thoroughly into the spirit of the joke.

"Well," answered Avdottia, "if you behave properly for the future, I won't."

"Thank you," said the Emperor gravely.

"Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do?" exclaimed Avdottia suddenly: "they'll be all drowned by this time."

"What, were there any more of you?" asked the Emperor: "you told us——"

"There's my chest of drawers crammed full of clean linen; and in the bottom drawer there's my best *sarafan*! Oh dear, and there's Vanka's new livery too!—Poor Vanka! I wonder

what has become of him.—And there's that pretty new head-dress which Vanka bought me the other day.—Oh, I hope Vanka is safe."

At this moment, they heard a cry of distress from a summer-house which stood between Avdottia's house and the opposite corner of Count Golovin's garden: and, on looking at it, they saw a young man standing on the roof, which alone was visible; while a large Danish dog, his only companion, was darting from side to side moving about in a strange and unaccountable manner. Avdottia gave a shriek.

"Dost thou know that young man?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes, good man, that's my son, my eldest-born," answered Avdottia: "save him, kind people!"

"Oh, it is, 'good men' and 'kind people' now—is it? After all thou hast been threatening to do?" said Elijah.

"I won't inform against you: save him, good folks!"

"Is that Vanka?" asked Alexander.

"Yes, my good man: the best son that mother ever had. Oh, save him, my good man!"

"I fear, if we take him in, he will punch my old head," said the Emperor, laughing.

"Oh, no, he won't: I won't tell him what you said about our baarin."

"Well, on that condition, perhaps we may manage to take him in," answered the Emperor, still laughing. "I am becoming an 'old fellow,' as you say: and Vanka looks strong and sturdy; I should not relish a tap from those ugly fists of his."

"Never fear, good man," said Avdottia gravely: "Vanka is as gentle as a lamb, when he is not roused. Take him in, that's a good man!"

Alexander steered the boat toward the summer-house; but the merry old Elijah wanted to carry on the joke a little farther.

"What!" he said to Avdottia: "hast thou the conscience to ask it, when thou art going to repay our kindness by complaining of us to his highness, Count Golovin?"

"I was only joking: I did not really mean to do it."

"I don't like such jokes; why, the very name of 'the terrible Count Golovin' is enough to frighten one into fits."

"Thou need'st not be so frightened," an-

swered Avdottia: "he is not so terrible as he is thought to be."

The boat was now alongside of the summer-house.

Vanka had been at work in the garden, and had not noticed the rising of the water till it was too late to return home safely. As Count Golovin's house stood on much higher ground than the bottom of the garden, where he was, he might easily have escaped by going up to it at once. But he thought of his mother and his brothers, left without a man to protect them; and he made a desperate effort to reach his home, accompanied by the dog Sokol. As the garden sloped downward, he plunged into deeper water at every step he took. Getting out of his depth at length, he had to swim. But he found it hard work with his clothes on: he was thoroughly tired before he was half way across, and saved his life only by climbing to the top of the summer-house.

Wet and cold as he was, he made the best of his surroundings, and helped the dog up to share his ark of refuge. But here a new danger revealed itself. The roof of the summer-house was swarming with rats, who had fled from the same enemy as himself. As first-comers, they

were inclined to dispute the right of possession, and fiercely attacked Vanka on all sides. In this war of races Sokol proved the most valuable of allies. He picked up the rats by mouthfuls, and tossed them into the foaming flood beneath. This was the singular work in which he had been engaged when the boat came into view.

Vanka came off the summer-house, and stepped into the boat; but poor Sokol had to swim for his life. Seeing his mother and his brothers safe in the boat, Vanka was full of gratitude, and began to pour out his thanks. But the Emperor cut him short.

"All one flesh," he said: "prince and peasant. Shall I set you down at Count Golovin's?"

"Yes, my good man," answered Avdottia; "and I hope thou wilt come in thyself, and receive thy reward."

"A likely thing I should put my head into the lion's jaws after what thou hast said!"

And the Emperor looked grave.

"I verily believe I've frightened the poor man! But I assure you I was only joking: indeed I was."

"What's all this row about?" asked Vanka.

"Why, this man spoke of our baarin in a way I didn't like," answered Avdottia gravely; "and I threatened, in fun, to inform against him, because he allowed his comrades to call him 'his Majesty'—that's all, Vanka."

But this "all" seemed a great deal to Vanka: he became very grave; and, when he spoke, it was with a solemnity which made the scene more ludicrous still, and called forth peals of laughter from the crew of the boat, Majesty enjoying the joke as heartily as any.

"It isn't good to joke on serious matters," said Vanka. "Do you know, good folks, that you have been guilty of something very like high treason? To take the Tzar's name in vain is almost as bad as to take God's name in vain."

"You must forgive us!" urged Elijah.

"And then to speak disrespectfully about his highness, Count Golovin! What did he say, mother?"

Avdottia was alarmed at the serious way in which her son looked at the matter. Her anxiety was now to smooth it down.

"Oh, it is nothing, Vanka," she answered in a soothing tone of voice: "beside, he has

saved our lives, remember ; and he is nearly as kind-hearted as our baarin himself."

"But what was it he said about Count Golovin, mother?"

"I promised not to tell thee."

"Then it must have been something very bad indeed!" said Vanka.

"Oh, no, nothing particularly bad," answered Avdottia: "only he is afraid that thou wilt punch his head."

Another peal of laughter in the boat.

"I said that I understood him to be harsh and cruel," Alexander explained.

"He harsh!" exclaimed Vanka, starting up.

But the crew all cried:

"Down! You'll upset the boat."

Vanka was forced to sit down. But he went on to say:

"He cruel! Out upon it! I tell thee what, old fellow," he continued fiercely: "it is well for thee that thou hast saved my mother's life; or else my fist would have claimed acquaintance with thy ugly mug."

"Young man," answered Alexander gravely: "never talk in that style to a man old enough to be thy father."

"My father never was the man to rail against his betters: he always kept a wise tongue in his head."

"Thou art a widow, then?" said the Emperor kindly to Avdottia. "May God comfort thee, my good woman; He is 'the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless.'"

"Why, the very thing our baarin said, and the English barishnia too."

"This baarin of thine seems to be a jewel of a man, according to thy account," continued the Emperor.

He was struck by all he had heard about Count Golovin that day.

"That he is: a bright falcon of a man."

"I should like to know more of him," said Alexander to himself, thinking aloud, as he often did: "I may have been mistaken in his character. These simple people are too much in earnest to deceive me; and, now that I think of it, when I spoke of him to Count Baranovitch, he too denied that he was cruel. I must look further into this."

These words produced a peculiar effect on Vanka: he turned pale, and sat uneasily in his seat. Could it indeed be some great man in

disguise? But Avdottia was so absorbed in her own train of thought, that she did not hear the latter part of the Emperor's speech, and answered the first part of it in the following words :

"Come in with us, then, good man : I know our baarin will receive thee graciously, if he is at home. Thou need'st not be so frightened : he is as affable to the low as to the high."

The rowers nearly split their sides with laughing. But, before Alexander could answer Avdottia, another boat came across their track, with Count Baranovitch at the helm. The Emperor hailed him, and asked if he had room for two more in his boat.

"Yes, your Majesty, we have room for three more," answered the Prime Minister.

Simple, harmless words ! But they heightened Vanka's fears ; and, while some men were stepping across, at the Emperor's orders, from the one boat into the other, he whispered in his mother's ears :

"I fear, mother, we are in an awful scrape," he said ; "dost thou know who that gentleman is, at the helm of the other boat ?"

"No."

"That's his highness, Count Baranovitch,

the Tzar's chief minister ; and, thou seest, *he* calls this old man 'his Majesty.' "

"The Lord preserve us ! How our tongues have been wagging !"

As there was more room now, Avdottia managed to throw herself on her knees at the bottom of the boat, and, holding her youngest boy in her arms, cried earnestly :

"Have mercy on us, your Majesty ! Forgive my Vanka ! It was all my fault : it was I that led him astray—indeed it was ! Do what you like with me ; but, oh, your Majesty, forgive my poor innocent boy !"

"Peace, my good woman !" answered Alexander. "Never fear : I can take a joke as well as any other man."

"To think that I should have taken the great White Tzar for an old sailor !" exclaimed Avdottia. "To think that, all this while, I should have been talking to his Majesty as if he had been a common moojeek ! I am ready to cut my tongue out when I think of it !"

"Indeed, good woman, it's long enough to spare a slice or two," said Elijah.

"And to think that the great White Tzar should have taken me in his own blessed arms !"

Soon after, Avdottia and her children were landed at Count Golovin's house. When the rescued persons in the boat had been bestowed elsewhere, the Emperor went to visit other parts of the city. In these errands of mercy he persevered till the flood had begun to abate, and all danger was over.

That day knit the ties closer which bound sovereign and subjects together, and did more to counteract the efforts of the *Union* than all that the secret police had ever done. Had not Majesty shown himself the true king and shepherd of his people that day? Even a few odd heresies, and coquettings with foreign abominations, might be forgiven in a man that put his own life in his hand to save the lives of others!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AVOWAL.

"My Madeline, sweet dreamer, lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped, and vermeil-dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest,
After so many hours of toil and quest"

KEATS: *The Eve of St. Agnes.*

How fared it with Mr. Cameron's household on that fearful day? Mr. Cameron himself was away from home; and Miss Meldrum was so nervous and fidgety, that the management of the household fell on Helen. A day to test what stuff there was in man or woman!

When the water first came pouring into the courtyard, Meeshka told the other inmates of the house not to be alarmed: he had seen many a flood, but had never known one to reach beyond a certain point. When the lower rooms of the house were half full, he began to be alarmed himself: it had already gone beyond the point he had known it to reach before; and, if so far, why not farther? And who could tell how much farther?

But he was puzzled as well as alarmed.

What to do? Meeshka the only man in the house: gardener and porter lodged in a small house at the other end of the large courtyard; and no way of passing from the larger house to the smaller save by swimming across the lake between. Meeshka unwilling to leave the womenkind alone in a house half full of water. Still the only hope of succour (to his mind) was for him to cross the water in search of a boat. So, in spite of rheumatism and tendency to cramp, the brave old fellow plunged into the flood. Alas, little chance of alighting on a stray boat at this time of day! All stray boats chartered by Majesty for his committee of relief!

The womenkind (Miss Meldrum and Helen, with housekeeper and six maids) fled for shelter to an upper storey of the house; and thence, from a bedroom looking out on the courtyard and the street beyond, they awaited Meeshka's return in dread silence. Many a minute crept slowly away; and still no Meeshka! Alas! no likelihood of his returning till the flood was over! Womenkind alarmed. Some of them sobbing! Miss Meldrum quite helpless. Not a coward, by any means: nay, usually full of a certain fidgety courage. But the great dread

of her life was—water! I daresay we all know women who, ordinarily brave, are unnerved by some one special bugbear. I know one lady who would brave a garotter, but is as weak and helpless as a child in the presence of—a spider! Another, who could face a lion, but is quite upset by a—mouse! So Miss Meldrum's bugbear was—water! An aunt of hers had been drowned many years before; and that had given such a shock to her nervous system, that, ever since, she had dreaded water as much as a mad dog.

Then it was that what stuff there was in Helen Cameron came out. She was naturally courageous; and, if she had a bugbear, happily it was not—water. She calmly assumed the post of commander-in-chief of the garrison, *vice* Miss Meldrum, resigned.

Besieged as they were by the relentless foe without, it was she that conducted the defence. She suggested plans of escape, useless though they all proved. She raised the drooping hearts of her—women by cheering words. She posted sentinels at each window, to keep a sharp look-out for any chance of succour. Every now and then boats passed up the street in front: but they were always full of people;

and, though the sentinels at the windows shrieked their loudest, the succourers had to turn a deaf ear to their cries. Moreover, Mr. Cameron's house stood far back from the street, and was outflanked by other houses on either side; so that, to the relieving parties, their cries of distress were drowned by nearer and louder calls on the right hand and on the left.

After a while, Natalia, who was one of the sentinels at the window, announced that another boat was coming; and the garrison—good for that, if for nothing else—again lifted up a loud and piercing cry for succour. Helen was at that moment far from the window, trying to cheer Miss Meldrum, who lay helpless on the bed. The announcement of boats in sight, and the cry for succour, had been so often repeated that they made little impression on her now. But this time her attention was arrested by one of the girls remarking that the boat was nearly empty; that there were only three men in it, the steersman and the two rowers. Who knew? Perhaps it might really save them. Helen rushed up to the window to judge for herself. She could see no boat: it had been in the middle of the street, but had then been steered aside. The

windows of the houses on both sides were filled with men, women, and children, calling for help. No doubt the boat had turned aside to one of these houses. What chance for *them*? Helen returned to Miss Meldrum's side. Scarcely had she done so, when the girls set up another shout, louder than any they had yet achieved. At the same time, Natalia exclaimed:

"Here's the boat again!"

But Miss Meldrum was so stunned by the noise, that Helen did not like to leave her.

"Not so loud!" she cried to the girls: "you make noise enough to rouse the dead."

"But if we don't cry out, barishnia, how can they tell that we are in want of help?" urged Natalia.

Natalia was ordinarily a quiet, dutiful girl. But the presence of danger and the sight of death will rouse the tamest creature. She had been hired to wait upon her mistress, but not to risk her life. Drowning not one of the articles of service in her contract! Contract itself well-nigh null and void in the face of death!

"But don't you see that your cries are drowned by those of the neighbours?" said

Helen : "we must patiently await our turn."

"*You* are safe enough," retorted Natalia, almost with a sneer ; "but who will think of us ?"

"I have not deserved that, Natalia," answered Helen quietly.

One would almost have thought that commander-in-chief had some hopes of deliverance, which she did not care to impart to her comrades — she was so wonderfully calm and unmoved. But her voice was drowned in shouts of joy from the girls.

"They have heard us !" cried Natalia : "so you see there was some use in shouting."

The housekeeper went up to the window, and said :

"They are coming this way."

Helen's heart beat fast ; but still she would not leave Miss Meldrum. By-and-by Natalia cried again :

"Here they are at last !"

Helen's heart beat faster ; and her face began to glow. Was it the vague hope fulfilled ?

"Who is it ?" she asked softly.

No need for the question ; because, the next moment, Captain Maleenovsky jumped

through the window into the room. Hurriedly he glanced round, and, espying Helen near the bed, stepped up to her. No time for lengthy greeting or idle ceremony. Pressing the hand which she held out to him, he said :

“I have come to save you, mademoiselle.”

Helen's face beamed with joy.

“I knew you would come,” she answered quietly, and yet with marked emphasis : “that is, if you were in Petersburg ; if you had not set out on your mission to China or your campaign in France,” she added playfully.

Captain Maleenovsky's face did not reveal the thoughts which this speech awakened within : as immovable as ever, looking, if anything, rather sterner and even harder than of yore.

“Be good enough to step into the boat at once, mademoiselle,” he said firmly, almost in a tone of command : “the water is undermining the house ; and we have no time to lose.”

Helen stared at him, as if surprised at the air he had for the first time assumed toward her. Next minute she out-heroded Herod by a command of her own :

“Take Mademoiselle Meldrum first.”

Captain Maleenovsky looked as if he were

going to argue the point with Helen ; but he speedily changed his mind—no time to waste in argument ! With his help, Miss Meldrum was safely placed in the boat. He then returned to Helen, and said :

“ Now it is your turn, mademoiselle.”

“ Not yet,” answered Helen quietly, but with unmistakable firmness : “ I will first see these girls placed safely in the boat.”

At this moment Natalia coloured up. Was she conscience-stricken ? For the first time, there was a slight change in Captain Maleenovsky’s impassive face. He began to lose his patience.

“ We have room only for seven, mademoiselle,” he said, “ or eight at the outside : our boat is small.”

“ Then take these girls,” answered Helen calmly : “ there will just be room for them all.”

“ And you ?”

“ I will stay here till another boat comes.”

“ No other boat is likely to come,” continued Captain Maleenovsky : “ your house is so far out of the street, that you will be overlooked. There is no other chance for you. I should not be here now, mademoiselle, if I had not come expressly to save *you*.”

"I know it!" cried Helen, her face again beaming with joy; "and I will never forget it. But you can come back for me when you have placed the others in safety."

"Before I can come back it will be all over with you," said Captain Maleenovsky.

"Very well, then, if one of us must perish, it shall be I: I will not stir till all the rest are safe."

"This is mere trifling," answered Captain Maleenovsky sternly: "come, mademoiselle."

He had been the owner of "souls;" and it had never entered his head that the master (or mistress) should die for the servant.

"I am mistress of the house," answered Helen proudly; "and I will be the last to leave it!"

Captain Maleenovsky had never seen such strength of will in Helen Cameron before. He had rather thought of her as a soft and yielding creature: well, she had always been soft and yielding to him. He had never seen her look so grand and queenlike before. No longer a grub: on the high road to be a butterfly; the wings still small and folded up, but growing every day, and likely, by-and-by, to bear her aloft. Patience!

They were interrupted by Natalia rushing forward, seizing Helen's hand, covering it with kisses, and crying :

"Forgive me, barishnia !—I have wronged you ! I never dreamt of such generosity ! I might have guessed it too. Fool that I was ! Forgive me, barishnia !"

"Gladly."

"Let me stay behind," continued Natalia, "and you go on with the rest. I will gladly die for you !"

"I know you are willing ; but it cannot be."

"Then I will die *with* you."

"No, Natalia," answered Helen firmly ; "I'll see you all safe before I stir myself."

"Then I will remain with you, mademoiselle," said Captain Maleenovsky. "If there is a chance of salvation, the strength of a man may be of some use to you ; and, if we must die, at any rate we shall die together."

Fierce joy, even at this solemn moment, in the thought that he might rob Mr. Cameron of his daughter after all, and wed her, will he nill he, in the awful wedlock of death. No consent asked : no witnesses needed : no one to forbid the banns !

The housekeeper and the maids were placed in the boat; and Captain Maleenovsky ordered the men to return with it as soon as they had landed their present load in a place of safety. But of that return there was some reasonable doubt. In that dreadful flood, which raged alike all over Petersburg, how long they might be in finding a place of safety, or whether they could find one at all—who could tell? Outlook of the dreariest: more likely than not that the two who were left behind were left to die!

When Captain Maleenovsky and Helen Cameron found themselves together in that big deserted house, they felt as if they were alone in the world. Death staring them in the face from without; their own hearts prompting them from within;—was it wonderful that they clung to one another in that last hour of their common doom? How it came about, perhaps neither of them could have clearly told: but there they were, clasped in one another's arms, locked in a first and last embrace. No need for words to utter their unutterable love. If die they must, they would at least die together.

This was what Captain Maleenovsky had

been trying to avoid for months. The fear of this had kept him resolutely from Helen's side : honourably, scrupulously, he had refrained from seeing her. He had been sternly schooling his heart. He thought he had succeeded. But which of us can reckon upon his own heart ? It is the great lesson of all past history : "the heart is deceitful above all things," says the oldest of books. The weakness of a moment had undone the work of months.

How long they remained there, neither of them could tell : in such supreme moments of existence time is to be reckoned, not by minutes, but by feelings. They were startled at last by voices which came through the window. The men had returned with the boat. Captain Maleenovsky started, as if waking from a dream. His face had a scared look as he tried to disengage himself from Helen.

"O mademoiselle !" he cried earnestly, looking into Helen's eyes : "forgive me ; and forget this."

"Forget it ! How can I ever forget it ?"

"It was a passing fit of madness," continued Captain Maleenovsky, turning away his eyes from Helen's : "think that I was not myself.

"We can never be anything to each other—never!"

Helen gazed on him with grave surprise. What could be the meaning of this sudden change? He looked wild: there was a terrible earnestness in his eyes.

"You are still thinking of your want of wealth," she said at length, fancying that she had gained a clue to the mystery: "but my father is rich; and I shall have enough for both."

"And your father?"

"My father loves me too well to make me unhappy for life," answered Helen.

A gleam of joy passed over his face; but again it was clouded over. He seemed to be struggling with himself. What the nature of the struggle was, she could not guess, nor whether it were his worse or his better nature that triumphed at last. A triumph of some sort there certainly was. All doubt seemed cleared away. A look of fixed resolve settled upon his massive face.

"It cannot be," he said firmly: "it is mere madness to think of it. Ah, would to God, mademoiselle, that my poverty were the only obstacle in the way! I once thought it in-

superable: I may, or I may not, have been mistaken. But, mademoiselle, there is another now; a really insurmountable obstacle."

"What is it?"

"I am a criminal."

"A criminal! I don't believe it."

And Helen laughed aloud. She looked so radiant and so full of faith in him, that it was hard to go on with the task which he had set before himself, within the last few moments of inward struggle. But the work of disenchanting her *must* be done; and he went on, sternly, ruthlessly, to dig up her faith by the roots. Gravely and solemnly he said:

"Alas, it is too true! I have committed a crime against society; at least, against the law."

"O God! Can this be true?"

Her faith was shaken. But was that enough? Must he not deliver a blow that would stagger her, and crush the last fragment of hope in her heart?

"Any day, I am liable to be arrested," he continued: "to be sent to the scaffold, or banished to Siberia for life."

The blow told only too well. Poor Helen swooned. Captain Maleenovsky caught her in

his arms, and saved her from falling to the ground. There was no time to lose: the flood was rushing into the house with fearful force. So he lifted her up to carry her to the boat. She was large and heavy; but he had the strength of a giant, and easily bore her away. As her head lay helplessly on his shoulder, he could scarcely resist the temptation to imprint a last kiss on her lifeless lips.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INTERESTING SINNER.

"Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
All full of freshe flowres white and rede:
Singing he was or flouting all the day;
He was as freshe as is the moneth of May."

CHAUCER: *Canterbury Tales*.

IF I went on to relate how the great flood of 1824 affected all the *dramatis personæ* in our history, I should never finish this tale. Some of them escaped: others perished; Epheem the coachman, for example, and Sokol the dog. I will therefore simply say that, amidst all the rude mischief it did, the flood had been polite enough to introduce two of our minor characters to each other—Lieutenant Alexeyev the sinner, and Rachel Randal the saint. Whether it were a pure act of mischief, or could in any way lead to good, remained to be seen. The fact was, Lieutenant Alexeyev thenceforth entered into a peculiar relationship with Rachel Randal: he had saved her body from the flood; and she, in return, tried earnestly to save his soul. All success to her efforts!

Lieutenant Alexeyev used to say, in lan-

guage which was enthusiastic for him, that "he fell in love with every handsome lady he saw:" which, being translated into plain English, meant that he liked to flirt with every pretty girl he met. Now Rachel was certainly handsome; nay, beautiful too, in her way, though that was not the highest. He thought her the most beautiful lady he had ever seen. You will remember that he had never come across Helen Cameron. The charms of "pretty little Katinka" were wholly eclipsed by the severer beauty of the pure and honest English girl. So he began to visit Rachel Randal a good deal; indeed, to spend with her most of the hours which could be spared from his duties.

No doubt he was sometimes bored by her serious talk. But, then, a good deal of it he could not understand; and happily, as he thought, the more theological it became, the less intelligible it was to him. Besides, as he said, "he always liked to hear a handsome lady talk—no matter what she said." Still, he was unmistakably bored at times. But, just when the boredom became the hardest to bear (indeed, so unbearable as to tempt him to cut the bore), he made a notable discovery.

He found out that Rachel Randal was likely to be "enormously rich." She already had a handsome fortune in her own right, left her by an uncle who had opportunely died a year or two before ; and her father, who really *was* "enormously rich," was likely to give her a dowry to be counted by hundreds of thousands. To a man steeped to the lips in poverty (nothing but the paltry pay of a lieutenant to live upon : always head and ears in debt, rising out of one financial scrape only to stumble into another), such a fortune seemed a fathomless mine of wealth and well-being. How delightful to be free from debt ; no longer to be dunned by tradesmen and sheriff's officers ; thenceforth and for ever to live the life of a comfortable gentleman ! The woman who could raise him to such a height of bliss, could he not afford to let her tongue wag ? Wag on for ever, fortune-bearing tongue !

Thus it was that he came under Rachel Randal's spiritual surveillance. It was not long before she found out that he was a man "who was a sinner ;" according to her high views of things, emphatically a sinner ! But surely he was all the more in need of saving. When her enemies, "the wicked," heard of it,

of course they had a ready explanation to account for her zeal. Such a handsome sinner: such an interesting sinner! Such a favourite with the ladies! Pure calumny! Had he been the ugliest and coarsest wretch living, she would have been just as zealous. Question easily brought to the test. If Lieutenant Alexeyev had been the only sinner Rachel Randal ever tried to save, there might have been some doubt: but when I know that, according to her light, she tried to do good to all within her reach; when I remember how unweariedly she visited the "black slums" of St. Petersburg, and carried light and healing to the dirty men and women crowded there;—I feel bound to shield her from such wanton attacks. Doubtless the fact, that Lieutenant Alexeyev was handsome and interesting, did not make the task less pleasant to Rachel; but to say that this was her motive for attempting to save him, was wholly to mis-read her character. So pure was her motive, and so little had she to hide, that she consulted her minister before she made up her mind to undertake the task.

When she entered Mr. Birkenshaw's study, she found him sitting in an easy-chair, with an open book on a bookstand by his side. She

was so much at home in his study, that he often did not notice her entrance. An "absent" man : his soul often far away, literally "absent" from his body ; so fully absorbed in his inward musings, that he was for the time blind and deaf to what was going on around him. In such a state she found him now. He had been reading : but his eyes were now turned away from the book ; and there was a dreamy look about those large grey eyes which showed that he was lost in his own thoughts. His arms were folded over his chest, and his head bent forward toward the ground. He had not heard Rachel enter, though she had knocked at the door. But Rachel was so used to this state of things, that, without further ado, she spoke to him about Lieutenant Alexeyev, and asked : Did he approve of her trying to save him from the error of his ways ? His answer was clear enough :

"Oh, certainly, Rachel."

But he still looked so dreamy and abstracted, that Rachel might well have doubted whether he understood her aright. Presently, right through the dreamy look, a puzzled expression stole into his face, as if the soul, which had been travelling miles away somewhere in the

inner regions, were coming back again to the outer world.

"But how to convince him that he is a sinner?" said Rachel.

"You must do it gently and tenderly, Rachel," answered Mr. Birkenshaw: "you must let him see that you love him, and that it is out of pure love you try to save him."

Rachel stood aghast. The thought of loving Lieutenant Alexeyev had not entered her mind. The idea of *her* loving a "sinner," however interesting he might be! A long array of frowning texts flitted across her memory—*forbidding the banns!* And the idea of her "letting him see that she loved him!" The first shock was given to her unbounded faith in Mr. Birkenshaw. Surely there were some subjects which the male brain, though high and true as Mr. Birkenshaw's, could not see in the true light! Her face was flushed; and, for the first time in her life, she felt angry with her pastor. With a burst of indignation she cried:

"But I don't love him!"

"Not love him?"

Mr. Birkenshaw was puzzled, and somewhat shocked.

"Certainly not," answered Rachel: "you mistake me altogether. God has thrown him across my path——"

"Effectually."

"And I wish to do him all the good in my power. He has saved my body, and I wish to save his soul."

"Not love a brother?"

"But he is not a brother yet."

Mr. Birkenshaw was puzzled again: he began dimly to see that they were playing at cross purposes.

"I do not quite understand you," he said: "are you not speaking about your brother Frederick?"

Rachel burst out laughing: grave as she was, the comic view of the situation was too much for her. At a glance she saw the cause of the mistake. She had consulted Mr. Birkenshaw about Fred not long before; and the minister, in his dreamy state, not having fully heard her present statement, had hastily jumped to the conclusion that she was still upon her former theme.

"My brother Fred!" exclaimed Rachel, when she had ceased laughing. "No, I was speaking of Lieutenant Alexeyev, the young

officer who saved us from the flood the other day."

Mr. Birkenshaw was wide awake at last. He fixed his deep-set grey eyes on Rachel, as though to scan her through and through. She did not blench: her clear blue eyes met his, and seemed to court inquiry. Mr. Birkenshaw asked:

"Can you truly say that no earth-born tenderness mingles with your anxiety on his behalf?"

"Truly."

Mr. Birkenshaw reflected a while, and then said:

"Truly I am in doubt, my child. There may be danger, and there may be scandal in your attempt; but, on the other hand, we should not let paltry scruples stand in the way of saving immortal souls. Surely, whenever we are in doubt on any point, we cannot do better than apply to the Fountain of all Wisdom. Let us pray."

"By all means."

And the two knelt down. Mr. Birkenshaw had what is called "a gift in prayer." His prayers were never formal or stereotyped. They sprang from his soul at the time, and

always caught the hue of his passing mood. Perhaps it was a lingering doubt about Rachel's "earth-born tenderness" that deepened the trenchant incisiveness which was characteristic of all his prayers. Rachel felt as if he were stripping her heart naked, and tracking any possible unworthy motive, which might have influenced her, to the deepest hiding-place in which it could have lurked; and, if she *had* fostered any "earth-born tenderness," she felt that she must have detected it now, and abandoned it as unworthy of the high mission which she had set before herself.

When they rose from their knees, Mr. Birkenshaw sat a long time without speaking, shading his face with his hands. At length he said :

"And what do you think now?"

"You have probed my heart," answered Rachel earnestly; "and I can detect no hollowness within."

There was a long pause.

"I think you may undertake this task," said Mr. Birkenshaw at length. "But, that there may be no scandal, never see that young officer alone: be sure that your friend Jenny Cameron is always with you in your interviews with him."

Thereupon Rachel took her leave.

And so it happened that Jenny Cameron was mixed up in the affair. The sweet, simple-hearted girl spent so much of her time with Rachel, that it was not very hard to make the arrangement; and, whenever Jenny was not with Rachel, Lieutenant Alexeyev was simply told that Mademoiselle Randal could not see him that day. Rachel scorned to tell even a white lie.

Lieutenant Alexeyev, on his part, was quite satisfied with this arrangement. "He could not have too much of a good thing," he said; and, with his easy luxurious temperament, he would have been well pleased to see himself surrounded by a dozen pretty girls. "The more the merrier." His love was not of that narrow absorbing kind which longs to have the beloved one all to itself. His was a large bountiful nature which could bestow itself on a hundred as readily as on one. Moreover, when he came to know Jenny, he liked her quite as well as Rachel: perhaps better. She was younger, fresher, prettier, more interesting. "What a pity that the little one hasn't got the fortune!" he said to himself.

It was not long before Rachel found that she

was not making much progress with his theological education. After he had found out that she was rich, he listened patiently to all she said, though every now and then a few unmistakable yawns somewhat damped her zeal. Nay, more, he readily assented to all she said; but, when she came to question him, she found that he knew no more of what they had been talking about than the man in the moon. The medicine she administered took no effect whatever on the stubborn constitution of the interesting sinner. She was deeply disappointed.

But, whenever she was baffled as a spiritual doctor, she had what she thought "an infallible panacea" to fall back upon: she administered a dose of—Birkenshaw. In two distinct shapes (call it pill and draught, if you like): Birkenshaw in the study, and Birkenshaw in the pulpit; Birkenshaw neat, and Birkenshaw diluted with copious draughts of commonplace. So, as soon as she saw that she was making no impression on Lieutenant Alexeyev, she earnestly begged him to see the Reverend Ebenezer Birkenshaw, and to hear him preach.

Alexeyev thought it a bore: he had that contempt for priests which was so common

among the educated young Russians of that day. Moreover, it was more than he had bargained for. It was wearisome enough to listen to Rachel's preachments; and yet they came from young and pretty lips which sugared the dose. But to listen to the prosy talk of a plain middle-aged man! Well, well: he would have submitted to greater hardships at the hands of a woman who could make him rich. So he swallowed his disgust, and answered politely that nothing would give him more unbounded delight. The sinner!

He knew enough of the influence of priests on ladies, and especially on young ladies, to be anxious about his standing with "the English priest." If he could win Mr. Birkenshaw's good-will, it might be the surest way of winning Mademoiselle Randal's—wealth. So he resolved to be very polite and meek to the heretic: to curb his own mocking and jesting spirit, or, at least, if he indulged in it at all, to do so in the shape of irony, which might convey the highest praise to the hearer, and yet be the subtlest form of ridicule. How far this style of address might succeed with Mr. Birkenshaw, he had no means of judging.

He entered Mr. Birkenshaw's study as if he

were entering the Emperor's cabinet. At the door he bowed low, put his right hand upon his heart, and addressed the mighty man, the controller of Rachel Randal's fortune, in the following speech, which he had carefully studied beforehand :

"Most August and Right Reverend, of-Meess-Randal-the-spiritual-director—I humbly desire to sit at your toes, and to inhale the smell (fragrance ?) of your wisdom and the breath of your grandiloquence. I have often listened of your notorious attributes from that pearl of unmarried ladies, Meess Randal, and I grandly aspire to be dazzled by your light, and constructed (instructed ?) on your understanding."

Flattery was always wasted on Mr. Birkenshaw : too true a man not to detect the note of falsehood in a speech. He knew well enough, no one better, how to pass over the flummery of the young officer's address, and come to the point.

"Sit down, sir," he said.

"Excuse me."

And Lieutenant Alexeyev still stood. Mr. Birkenshaw thought he did not understand him. So he rose, and, placing a chair before

Alexeyev, pointed downward with his finger, again saying:

"Sit down."

"I understand; but I elect to upstand."

"If you stand, I must stand also," answered Mr. Birkenshaw; "and, as I have just had a long walk, and feel tired, I should prefer to sit."

"If you command my not standing, I must obey."

And therewith Lieutenant Alexeyev sat down, and, feeling more and more at home, glided into his usual easy lounging attitude. The contrast was laughable.

"I have heard of you from Miss Randal," Mr. Birkenshaw went on to say.

"I am not worthy to issue out of her sweet lips."

Mr. Birkenshaw, with his usual abruptness, came to the point at once. Looking point-blank at the young officer, he asked:

"Are you converted?"

Now, in spite of his theological training in Rachel Randal's school, Lieutenant Alexeyev had not the faintest glimmering of the theological meaning of "conversion." "Converted" meant "turned:" turned from what? Hah! Could Mr. Birkenshaw have heard of "pretty

little Katinka?" Well, he had resolved to give her up, if Rachel gave him her hand and wealth. So he could answer pretty honestly :

"Yes, I am almost entirely converted."

Mr. Birkenshaw was somewhat puzzled : he did not know what to make of the strange fish that had so strangely come into his net. He saw that Alexeyev had somehow missed the point of his question ; and, to do away with all further misunderstanding, he repeated it in what he thought a clearer shape :

"Is your soul saved?"

But unhappily, the word "soul" was as vague to the young officer as the other word which had been used : indeed, theologically more vague ; because he had already a definite idea attached to it, and that *not* Mr. Birkenshaw's idea. "Soul" meant "serf." Was his "serf" saved?—doubtless from the late flood. Did not Mr. Birkenshaw know that he was poor, and owned no serfs ? He pulled a long face and answered dolefully :

"Unhappily I have no soul to save."

Mr. Birkenshaw was startled and shocked.

"What do you mean, sir?" he said, fixing his weird grey eyes on Alexeyev : "every one has a soul."

Now that a subject of conversation was started, with which he thought himself tolerably familiar, Lieutenant Alexeyev felt quite at his ease. He lounged more than ever on the chair, and rattled away.

"Every one a soul?" he cried. "I much wish it! It would be the pleasant then. Is it because you have the many that you so think? If I may politely ask, how many souls you have?"

Mr. Birkenshaw felt more and more bewildered. What did the young fellow mean? Was he mad; or was he merely chaffing him?

"Only one," he answered gravely, staring at Alexeyev: "no one has more than one soul."

"Pardon, most Reverend of Meess-Randal-the-spiritual-director!" said the young officer: "I better know. My friend Captain Maleenovsky has had ten thousand souls; and some have twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand souls!" exclaimed Mr. Birkenshaw.

Clear that he was likely to make nothing of the queer fish. He made many fresh attempts; but from a soul cased in the panoply of theological ignorance, his keenest shafts glanced aside blunted and powerless. When Lieutenant

Alexeyev took his leave, he was theologically just where he had been before.

It was not long before Rachel Randal found out that the theological pill had taken no effect whatever on her interesting patient. But the theological draught? Who could tell? Perhaps it might just suit the stubborn sinner's constitution. Birkenshaw diluted might tell upon the system which had simply thrown off Birkenshaw neat. Worth trying, at any rate. So she begged Lieutenant Alexeyev to hear Mr. Birkenshaw preach; and Lieutenant Alexeyev, with an eye to the future, straightened a wry face which was in the very act of forming, and politely answered that nothing would give him more unbounded delight. The following Sunday morning, duty permitting, the Moravian Church was to be graced by the presence of the aide-de-camp to his Imperial Highness, the Grand Duke Nicholas.

CHAPTER X.

THE THEOLOGICAL DRAUGHT.

"Jest not at preacher's language or expression :
How know'st thou, but thy sinnes made him miscarrie ?
Then turn thy faults and his into confession.
God sent him, whatsoe'er he be. O tarry,
And love him for his Master : his condition,
Though it be ill, makes him no ill Physician."

HERBERT: *The Church Porch.*

THE following Sunday morning Rachel Randal was, as usual, in her seat in good time. She looked round to see if Lieutenant Alexeyev were in the church. As the pews rose one above another on all sides as in an amphitheatre, and the congregation was not large, she could clearly see every one. The object of her anxiety not there. Twelve o'clock struck, and the service began. Rachel looked round again more than once ; no Alexeyev. Helen Cameron, looking on from her side-pew, saw that Rachel seemed fidgety : so unlike her usual self, wont to be absorbed in the service. Helen wondered what the matter was. Others saw and wondered too. At length it was publicly explained to the whole congregation in a way not the most agreeable to Rachel's feelings.

While Mr. Birkenshaw was reading the lesson, there was an unusual stir at the lower end of the church near the door. Voices were heard as if in dispute. All eyes were turned to the spot. A handsome young officer was seen talking to the pew-opener. His dazzling uniform, glittering with gold, contrasted strangely with the sober suits of the merchants and tradesmen, who, with their families, formed the congregation. Such an unusual thing was enough to excite a quiet congregation like that at the Moravian Church. But the excitement rose to its height when the handsome young officer said, in a voice by no means low, and clearly heard by many at the lower end of the church:

“Mademoiselle Randal’s seat. Expects me.”

“Hush! not so loud!” answered the pew-opener in a low voice.

The scandal of the thing! There were some in that congregation who knew Lieutenant Alexeyev by repute as well as by sight. His follies and his vices were too glaring to be hid. All who knew anything of him knew him as a loose, reckless, good-for-nothing fellow. Miss Randal *expected* him, then? Some intimacy between the two! True, it had been whis-

pered of late that all was not as it ought to be in that quarter. But those who knew Rachel had refused to believe those whispers. What;—she? The Saint, *par excellence*: the strictest of the strict; “of the straitest sect of the Pharisees!” It was not long since she had said some very cutting things of Helen Cameron in connection with another young officer, who was virtue itself by the side of Lieutenant Alexeyev. And yet here was something like a public confirmation of the scandal!

Was not Helen Cameron avenged? The tables were indeed turned! Rachel Randal had, she believed, wronged her grievously with many in that congregation; and here poetical justice was being done on the wrongdoer before her eyes. Well, there *was* a passing feeling of satisfaction in her mind. Not a butterfly, yet, you see; only a chrysalis! Miss Meldrum, who sat by her side, could scarcely hide her joy. She could not forgive the wrong which had been done to her darling. She could not forget Rachel’s busy intermeddling: the high tone she had assumed; the bitter words she had uttered. And she whispered in Helen’s ear:

“Serves her right!”

In the meanwhile, Rachel herself was scarcely conscious of the strong feeling which was rising against her. She had turned round with the rest, and seen Lieutenant Alexeyev. Her heart had been gladdened by the sight. Was not the theological draught about to operate upon the stubborn sinner? But she had not heard the young officer's words, or guessed their import. As he stalked up the aisle after the pew-opener, she wondered why he could not be content with a seat near the door; why, coming in so late, he should choose to disturb the whole congregation by marching before them, his sword clattering by his side. She never guessed that he was coming to her pew! As he marched nearer and nearer to her (a regular military tramp, tramp, tramp, with the accompanying clatter, clatter, clatter), a dreadful misgiving came over her. But what was her dismay, and what the scandal to the whole congregation, when the handsome young officer, on coming up to her pew, smiled and smirked, bowed very low, and actually spoke!

"Ten thousand apologies, mademoiselle, for coming in so late," he said, not attempting to lower his voice.

"Hush!"

Rachel Randal blushed, and looked remarkably nervous and uncomfortable, as you can easily believe.

"I can assure you, mademoiselle, that it was not my fault: really could not help it."

"You must not speak here."

Rachel spoke in a low, subdued tone of voice; so low that her words were drowned in Mr. Birkenshaw's louder tone. Alexeyev did not hear her, and continued:

"Imperial Highness ——"

"Hold your tongue!"

Rachel spoke quite sharply this time, but not loud enough to put an extinguisher on the end of the sentence:

"And all that sort of thing."

Strange as it may seem, Lieutenant Alexeyev was not aware that he was doing wrong. It is so common to hear talking in Russian churches, that it seemed natural to him to apologise for coming late. But it was as natural for the congregation, accustomed to decency and order in their worship, to look on his behaviour as a wanton outrage. And the worst of it was, that Rachel Randal seemed to them to be aiding and abetting him in his outrageous behaviour. They could see that she

spoke to him every now and then : but they could not hear what she said ; and, from a little distance, it seemed as if the two were talking, even flirting, together. When he took his seat beside her, the scandal did not cease : indeed, it grew rather worse as the service went on. Every now and then, as something tickled his fancy, he bent sideward toward her and made some remark. No one could account for this scandalous scene : the most charitable thought that Rachel had lost her senses.

During the prayer, Lieutenant Alexeyev behaved with more decorum than before. Once or twice, indeed, he looked around him into people's faces rather more unblushingly than they would have relished if their eyes had not been shut. When the second hymn was sung, he broke out again. Seeing all around him sing, he sang too : perhaps on the principle of doing at Rome as the Romans did. He knew nothing of music ; but he had a strong tenor voice, and could sing a comic song or two by rote. Knowing no other, he struck in with a comic song, which set his neighbours tittering, and so thoroughly put out the precentor (there was

no organ), that he and the congregation after him stuck in the middle of a verse, while Lieutenant Alexeyev, happily unconscious, was left alone singing his comic song.

"Sing no more," whispered Rachel.

"Why all stop?" asked the young officer in surprise, looking about him: "getting on beautifully."

"Hush!"

When the hymn had been sung, Mr. Birkenshaw gave out his text: "All souls are mine." "Soul," as we have seen, meant "serf" to him. Being quite unused to preaching, and somewhat slow in understanding English, he was not aware that Mr. Birkenshaw was quoting from the Bible, but fancied that he was giving utterance to a bold proposition of his own: "All serfs are mine."

"How ridiculous!" he cried.

"Hush!"

But a new train of thought was already beginning to work in his brain. Mr. Birkenshaw could not have meant to say anything so absurd: if he had, would his hearers have received it so gravely and quietly? He, the lieutenant, must have misunderstood him. Very likely he was speaking of some

particular estate, and meant to say: "All the souls on it are mine."

"Old fellow so very rich?" he asked Rachel: "pray, how many souls has he?"

"You really must not talk," said Rachel.

She might just as well have tried to fasten the sun to a riding-post as to tie the tongue of the gay and mercurial lieutenant. For a few minutes, indeed, he was quiet. But when Mr. Birkenshaw warmed with his subject, and began to toss about his arms in the warmth of his eloquence, he bent his head toward Rachel, and said:

"Why throw his arms up and down like a telegraph? Signal to hearers—eh? Or old one threatening his 'souls?'"

"Hold your tongue!"

"I will whisper, then."

"Don't whisper even."

Poor Rachel was sorely tried. Was ever saint placed in a more laughably painful situation? What must her fellow-worshippers think of her? She, known as the most devout and earnest member of that church? Well for her that she had already established her reputation as such! If it had been Helen Cameron, or any other lost sheep? Ah, little

did Rachel guess how hardly some of her fellow-worshippers were already thinking of her!

But what to do? She had a great mind to walk out, and, indeed, was on the very point of doing so, when, happily, it struck her that Lieutenant Alexeyev would infallibly follow her, with his military tramp, tramp, tramp, and the accompanying clatter, clatter, clatter. What an edifying sight for the congregation! No help for it but to remain where she was, and bear it as best she could to the end of the service. The more she spoke to forbid her companion to speak, the more it looked as if they were in league with each other. Let him talk on—happily in whispers!

To say that she was wretched would be to say very little. She had never been so wretched in all her life before. Her annoyance, uneasiness, and shame, became unbearable. Useless to try to worship: sermon even not to be listened to. Surely a judgment upon her for her sins! Ay, but what sin? Ah, Rachel Randal, is there not such a sin as uncharitableness in your ideal list? Have you ever pondered the words: "He

that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Is not Helen Cameron yonder to remind you of the past? What sin, indeed!

Doubtless, Mr. Birkenshaw had meant his sermon to tell specially on the young Russian officer. Rachel had told him that Lieutenant Alexeyev was to be at the church that morning. But unhappily, as we have seen, the young scapegrace had not theological training enough to understand even the simple word "soul." So the sermon merely shot over his head. He had not the slightest idea what Mr. Birkenshaw was talking about. After a very short effort to follow the preacher, he felt tired, and refused to listen at all. Seeing that his running remarks were coldly and even frowningly received, he ceased to speak, and looked round to examine the congregation.

Then for the first time his eye alighted on Helen Cameron. He was fairly smitten. As he himself said: "Never seen anything half so beautiful before." Helen was not looking well; and some thought that her beauty was beginning to fade. But, in spite of that, she was undoubtedly the most beau-

tiful woman, not only in that congregation, but in St. Petersburg itself. She threw Rachel Randal altogether into the shade. Alexeyev tried to catch her eye; in fact, "ogled" her, to the great scandal of the worshippers. But she had seen him look at her, and wisely fixed her own eyes on Mr. Birkenshaw, so that she seemed a better listener than usual. Lieutenant Alexeyev exclaimed:

"Uncommonly beautiful girl!"

The indignation of the congregation had been rising step by step, and had now reached its climax. Some grave seniors were indeed discussing the wisdom of thrusting out the irreverent young sinner by force. Ticklish thing to do! Aide-de-camp to Imperial Highness Grand Duke Nicholas! Must be done, though: worshippers outraged long enough! Happily just then the service came to an end.

Rachel Randal was one of the most popular members of that church. Young, handsome, rich, liberal, earnest, devoted to every good work: it could not well be otherwise. Whenever the service closed, numbers usually flocked round her. But they rather fought shy of her

this morning. She accounted for it by the presence of the irreverent young officer in her pew. When he was gone? What a relief!

Presently she turned round to speak to a lady in the pew behind her. Now this lady was not only one of Rachel's warmest friends, but, as sitting nearest to her, had had the best means of judging what had passed between her and the handsome young officer; and yet, though she had witnessed Rachel's attempts to keep him in order, she received Rachel's advances with coldness. And why? She was scandalised, not so much with the present as with what it seemed to imply of the past. Rachel Randal must have given that gay young officer a good deal of encouragement before he could have ventured to behave to her so outrageously before the world, and in the house of God too. The present merely gave a glimpse of the past.

And, if such was the reasoning of the one who sat nearest to her, and therefore knew most, what must have been the thoughts of those who were farther off, and had to trust a good deal to their own fancy for an understanding of what had taken place? To them it seemed that Rachel Randal had been trifling

and flirting with the handsome young officer throughout the service. As she walked down the aisle, followed by the dashing young officer, they made a clear lane for her as far as they could. The clatter, clatter, clatter, of her follower's sword seemed to be the signal for what cousin Jonathan calls a "skedaddle." They all shrank from the irreverent sinner's touch: as Rachel was close to him, they necessarily shunned her too. She felt it deeply; nay, was cut to the heart. How could they misunderstand her so? They might have trusted her! If she had been gay and flighty, "as that publican"—Helen Cameron? But she! And when she was engaged in a work of mercy, too! Too bad!

Was not Helen Cameron avenged now? She saw it all: the poetical justice which was being done on her quondam accuser. Most vividly she remembered the scene which had taken place months before on the same spot, when she, Helen Cameron, had had to run the gauntlet of cold looks and freezing words from the same eyes and the same lips. Rachel Randal had done it all then; and now Rachel Randal herself had to run the gauntlet. If Helen Cameron had been revengeful, she must

have tasted the sweetest pleasure now. But, with all her faults (and I have not hid them), she was not wanting in generosity. She was "capable of noble deeds," as Jenny had said. And that "capability" was fast unfolding within her at this time. She felt for poor Rachel. True, she had not spoken to her for months. But what of that?

She broke loose from her friends, and hurried after Rachel. The departing congregation hindered her a good deal; but she overtook Rachel outside the church-door, just as she turned round to give a sharp answer to a shrewd old Scotchman, one of Helen's warmest admirers, who had espoused her cause with national jealousy, and resented the wrong which had been done her in the past. The old man was saying to Rachel:

"Maybe ye mind now how ye yoursel' persecuted a sweet and winsome young leddy—— Eh, sirs!" he suddenly added; "but this is a braw sicht for sair een!"

For the "sweet and winsome young leddy" herself had stepped before him, and held out her hand warmly to Rachel, saying the while in the sweetest of tones:

"Never mind, Rachel; it is all right."

"Thank you," answered Rachel.

She spoke faintly: she was humbled; and she was bewildered. Touched as she was, perhaps she would rather have gone without Helen's sympathy. It was too humbling.

"I saw you all the time," continued Helen, pressing Rachel's hand; "and I saw that you could not help it."

Poor Rachel could resist no longer. Her eyes grew dim: she felt "a lump in her throat," as her Majesty would say. She returned the pressure of the hand, and said:

"God bless you!"

Another generous impulse came over Helen. Her heart had lately been softened by grief. She threw her arms round Rachel's neck, and kissed her warmly. Poor Rachel could no longer curb her feelings: she abandoned herself to Helen's embrace, and sobbed aloud. In that moment a new light seemed to her to beam on many things. She thought of a certain passage of Scripture which speaks of "heaping coals of fire" upon the head; and for the first time she began to doubt whether she had not wholly misread and misjudged Helen's character.

Such a scene could not take place without

some effect on the bystanders. Few eyes there that were not moist ; for most of them knew the past history of the two girls. There was, undeniably, a reaction in Rachel's favour. Many were ashamed to see the girl, whom Rachel had wronged, stand by her so bravely, while they held aloof. Perhaps they had judged her too harshly. And one and another came forward, and greeted her kindly. What those bystanders thought of Helen, I need not say : such deeds as hers speak to every heart. And that was the girl whom they had scorned and flouted a few months before ! But, in justice to them, we must not forget that the discipline of life had been hard at work upon her ever since. She had been growing fast : but a grub then ; undoubtedly a chrysalis now.

"Come to dine with us, Rachel," Helen went on to say : "do !"

"Yes, do !" echoed a voice from behind.

It was Mr. Cameron's. He had followed Helen quickly, somewhat alarmed by her sudden departure, and had witnessed the fore-going scene. The tears were in his eyes ; and his voice was husky.

"You are very kind !" cried Rachel, choking.

"We shall be delighted to see you," continued Mr. Cameron. Then, lowering his voice, he added: "After what has passed, you will understand that bygones are bygones."

"Thank you!" said Rachel; "I'll come."

"That's right," answered Mr. Cameron, shaking hands with her warmly: "forget and forgive."

"I am very glad!" said Helen earnestly.

Mr. Cameron turned to his daughter, and whispered in her ear:

"You noble girl! Your father is proud of you!"

He could scarcely refrain from following her example; from falling on her neck and kissing her before all these people.

Here a diversion was made by Lieutenant Alexeyev begging Rachel to "crown the pleasures of the day by introducing him to that glorious young lady"—Helen Cameron. The introduction was duly made; and Rachel Randal, for the first time for many months, went to dine with the Camerons.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOYAGE.

“What

If I do line one of their hands? 'Tis gold
Which buys admittance: oft it does; yea, and makes
Diana's rangers false themselves, yield up
Their deer to the stand o' the stealer; and 'tis gold
Which makes the true man kill'd, and saves the thief;
Nay, sometimes, hangs both thief and true man. What
Can it not do and undo?”

SHAKSPERE: *Cymbeline*.

RACHEL RANDAL'S heart had been so touched by Helen Cameron's generosity, and had for a time opened so genially, that Helen hoped their old friendship would return. She was wounded and sore. She yearned for a friend: for some one to open her heart to; some sympathy, some counsel, in her dire need. To whom to unbosom herself? Her father? Out of the question: how could he understand the delicate position in which she stood? Jenny Cameron? Helen had never made a bosom friend of her, and could not begin now. Miss Meldrum? A dear old creature, full of sympathy and love; but an old maid, who, never having been in love herself (as far as Helen

knew), could not understand her feelings, or enter into her grief. Oh, if she had a mother to go to! No wonder she earnestly longed for a renewal of Rachel's friendship. Rachel was somewhat hard: but she *could* love; and, where she loved, she was as true as steel.

But Helen was disappointed. For a few days Rachel seemed to live under the influence of the generous deed which Helen had done. But she cooled again. She had seen all her old friends, and set herself right with them; and she had soon regained her old influence in the Congregational Church. She never knew how much of this she owed to Helen; to the lead which Helen had given to public opinion on that memorable Sunday. And now she looked back almost with bitterness to the part which Helen had then played. That the pet lamb of the fold should have been thrown on the pity of a poor lost sheep! That the "pharisee of the pharisees" should have fallen so low as to be befriended by "that publican!" That she, Rachel Randal, the devotee, the saint *par excellence*, should have been succoured by a "light and frivolous" girl like Helen Cameron! She could not bear to think of it: so she steeled her heart afresh against her old

friend ; and, in a few days, the relation between the two again became what it had been since Rachel's return from England.

Helen was bitterly disappointed. Thrown back upon herself, she brooded over her trouble. Again and again she recalled to mind Captain Maleenovsky's parting words. There were times when she could not believe them. He a criminal? It could not be. A man so honourable, so highminded ! And yet, had he not said so himself? Had he not solemnly assured her : any day he might be arrested ; sent to the scaffold, or banished to Siberia for life? What motive for saying so, if it were not true? What motive for falsely blackening his own character? And then a black horror came over her—say it were true? The very thought of it seemed to crush her. But what could the crime be? The Russian code of laws was remarkably mild, as far as the graver crimes were concerned. Even murder, unless it were peculiarly atrocious, was not punished with death. What crime could it be, then, that would send him to Siberia or the scaffold? Murder? The very thought was overwhelming. If Helen had had any one to unbosom herself to, she might have

been spared much of what she suffered. But the lonely brooding over her sorrow undermined her health. The bloom faded from her cheeks, and the lustre from her eyes. She, who had been so radiant in her beauty, became pale, haggard, and wan.

Mr. Cameron was seriously alarmed. Dr. Hunt honestly acknowledged that he could do nothing. The best physicians in Petersburg met in consultation ; but they were all alike baffled. Throughout the winter months, Helen faded and faded ; and, in the spring, symptoms of consumption set in. Then the doctors all agreed that she should try the effects of a voyage to England ; and that, if she were no better in the autumn, she should wend her steps southward, and spend the following winter in some warmer climate. The ship *Boreas*, which afforded "superior accommodation" to passengers, was to sail on the 12th of June, 1825, from Cronstadt to Hull, where a cousin of Mr. Cameron's lived ; and it was decided that Helen should sail by that ship. Mr. Cameron, having no partner in his business, was not able to take her himself ; but Miss Meldrum, in spite of her dread of water, was glad enough to take charge of

Helen, and so get the chance of seeing dear old England once more.

On the 12th of June, Mr. Cameron accompanied Miss Meldrum and Helen to Cronstadt. The *Boreas* still lay in the harbour when they went on board. But everything betokened its approaching departure. The custom-house officers, who had given the vessel a clearance, were just stepping down into a boat which lay alongside ; and Captain Hawkins, of the *Boreas*, was busily bowing them off. The sailors began to weigh the anchor, filling the air with their work-inspiring cries. Presently came the order for strangers to leave the ship. The friends on deck prepared to bid each other farewell. Mr. Cameron looking sad : thinking of the long separation between himself and the daughter whom he had scarcely lost sight of for a single day before. Helen, somewhat flushed with excitement, less pale and wan than she had been for many a day. Miss Meldrum beginning to look blue about the nose, forecasting the agonies which lay before her. Captain Hawkins came up to Mr. Cameron to remind him that it was time to be off. Helen looked with some curiosity on the man in whose power she was to be for some weeks.

His looks did not win her trust. He was a little man with a jaunty air, smartly dressed, somewhat dandified indeed, and rather unsailor-like. Not bad looking, but with a sinister expression in his face which Helen did not like. Her scrutiny was put an end to by Mr. Cameron.

"God bless you, my child!" he murmured, folding her to his heart: "I hope, by the time you return, the roses will all have returned to your cheeks."

Helen felt a strong tendency to sob aloud; but, for her father's sake, she bravely curbed her feelings, and made an effort to look cheerful and unconcerned.

"Never fear, papa," she answered with a gulp: "I begin to feel better already."

"You look better."

And Mr. Cameron gazed on her admiringly.

"I believe the sea-breezes have done me good: when I return, I shall be as red as a milk-maid."

"Ah, I can't bear the thought of parting with you for so long, my darling," continued Mr. Cameron, kissing Helen fondly: "I wish I could have arranged to go with you."

"Why don't you come, then, Mr. Cameron?"

asked Captain Hawkins: "there's plenty of room."

"Pooh!" said Mr. Cameron; "and what is to become of my business in the meanwhile? No arrangements made for any one to carry it on, you know."

"Do, darling papa!" exclaimed Helen, clinging to her father: "you can afford it."

"Impossible!"

And yet Mr. Cameron looked undecided.

"That would be even better—than paying ten thousand pounds—for a sight of the Feast of the Jordan," said Miss Meldrum, looking bluer than ever about the nose.

All Helen's brave resolves had been swept away by the impulse of the moment.

"I can't tell you," she cried, "how much I dread going this voyage without you."

"There's nothing to fear, darling."

"No gentleman to protect me!"

"You will be under *my* protection, Miss Cameron," said Captain Hawkins pompously.

Mr. Cameron looked distressed, and nearly yielded to his daughter's pleading voice. When, in after times, he learnt the details of the voyage, he wished that he had yielded. But Miss Meldrum was there, "to save him

from making a fool of himself," as he thought. In sarcastic tones she cried :

" ' My kingdom for a horse. ' "

" You rebuke me well," answered Mr. Cameron : " but you are not a parent ; and you cannot understand my feelings. "

" Thank goodness I am not ! "

" But you will watch over her as if she were your daughter," continued Mr. Cameron earnestly, taking Miss Meldrum's hand : " will you not, dear Miss Meldrum ? "

Miss Meldrum's tender heart was touched at once. She pressed Mr. Cameron's hand and said :

" You may depend on me. "

" Remember she is my only treasure. "

" Unless rumour belies you greatly, you have a pretty treasure beside," put in Captain Hawkins with his sinister smile.

The melting process, which had been going on in Miss Meldrum's soft heart for the last few moments, was now complete. She actually shed tears as she cried :

" Forgive me, Mr. Cameron ! I fear I spoke—unfeeling words just now. "

" Quite right," answered Mr. Cameron : " you merely reminded me of my duty. And

you, sir," he added, turning to Captain Hawkins, "I feel sure that you too will take care of my treasure, and protect her to the utmost of your power."

"Yes, to the utmost of my power," repeated the captain. "But it is time for you to go, sir."

"Forgive a father's anxiety to put off the dreadful moment of parting as long as possible."

And Mr. Cameron again folded Helen in his arms, and clasped her to his heart. This time he fairly burst into tears. The last sad farewell words were spoken; and Captain Hawkins politely bowed Mr. Cameron into his boat.

Returning to the deck, the captain walked up to a rough, thickset, jolly, sailor-like man, whose nose, in its goodly proportions and its flaming hue, loudly proclaimed that "grog was king," and gave his final instructions for sailing.

"Won't you wait for that ere prince?" asked the sailor in a deep husky voice.

His name was Joey Willing; and he was first mate of the *Boreas*.

"—— me if I do!" answered Captain Haw-

kins; "it is long past the hour; and I will wait for no man, prince or no prince—unless he fees me for doing it."

"And he hev'n't?"

"Not a stiver!"

"Still a few minits——"

"I tell you, I am not going to lose this breeze for the greatest prince in Europe."

"I am willing."

Joey Willing was fond of this small pun.

Indeed, it was the most favourable wind they could have had. The captain being firm in his resolve, in a few minutes they were moving out of the harbour. Helen was sitting on deck with Miss Meldrum. There was a stiff breeze, which, while it pleasantly fanned her flushed cheeks, made the water particularly unpleasant and rough. No sooner had the ship reached the open roadstead, than it began to pitch and roll in a way which gave Miss Meldrum a slight foretaste of those horrors which she had resolved to brave for another sight of dear old England.

They had not gone far before they heard loud shouts from behind. A large boat, filled with men, was following in their wake. The rowers were tugging at their oars with might

and main, clearly resolved to overtake the ship. They were still too far off to be recognised : but the captain evidently knew them ; for he at once stopped the progress of the *Boreas*. Helen was on the point of asking who they were, when a cry of distress from Miss Meldrum drew her away. Oh, if she had only stopped to ask the question, or waited till the boat came alongside ! How much misery she might have been spared !

Miss Meldrum was looking very ill : deadly pale, and with that sleepy aspect which betokened the incipient attacks of the dire foe within. Miss Meldrum protect Helen Cameron ! Heaven help the girl, if she had no better protection !

“I think, my darling, I had better retire—to my berth at once,” said Miss Meldrum faintly.

“I think so too, auntie,” answered Helen.

She helped Miss Meldrum downstairs, and did not leave her till she had seen her safe under the wings of the stewardess. But the close air of the cabin made her squeamish ; and, feeling that the only way to avoid sickness was to breathe the fresh air, she rushed out, and went on deck.

There everything was changed. The ship was making way as fast as full canvas could carry her; and, the wind being the most favourable they could have had, there was no need for tacking. They had gone a good way; and Cronstadt was a mere speck behind them. The deck was occupied by several gentlemen. She scarcely liked to venture alone among them. And yet she must accustom herself to it. So she took heart of grace, and boldly walked forward into the midst of the gentlemen.

It would be hard to overrate the sensation which she made. She suddenly burst upon them like a dazzling vision of beauty. Her beautiful face, now flushed with excitement; her tall and handsome figure enveloped in a white *negligée*;—took them by storm. Not one of them had looked forward to such an agreeable addition to their party. They seemed to be all Russians; and, with the native politeness of their race, they bowed and acknowledged her presence, without seeming to intrude upon her. Helen noticed that one of them sat on a stool, with his back to her, looking towards Cronstadt. But, before long, he turned round; and her heart sank within her as she recognised—PRINCE BORIATINSKY.

A satirical Frenchman has said : *Grattez un Russe ; et vous trouverez un Tatare*. An exaggeration, as most satire is : for, undoubtedly, there are many real gentlemen in Russia ; and, if you scratched away till your nails were worn down to the skin, you would never come to any thing beyond the gentleman. Still, there is truth in the saying. There are noblemen in Russia, who, under the outward guise of gentlemen, hide the hearts of ruffians. Outwardly courteous ; but inwardly “ ravening wolves.” They will press your hand warmly with fingers soft and velvety as the tiger’s paw ; but, unhappily, as with the tiger, their claws will sometimes fasten on your flesh. Helen had too much reason to fear that Prince Boriatsky was one of the “ ravening ” sort. No wonder her heart sank within her at the thought of being shut up with him for weeks in that ship. One burning thought took possession of her soul : could she not make her escape from the ship yet ?

As soon as he saw her, he rose and came up to her. He greeted her graciously : with the greatest politeness, but without the slightest approach to undue familiarity. When fully “ made up,” he was a handsome looking man ;

and, in spite of his pompousness and his grandiloquence, when he tried to please, there was something winning in his address. He evidently tried to make her feel at her ease. But she scarcely listened to him : she was thinking how she could see Captain Hawkins before it was too late, without awakening Prince Boriatsky's suspicions as to her aim. As soon, therefore, as she could get away without rudeness, she walked off. The prince followed at once, and soon overtook her.

"Permit me to render you some assistance, Miss Cameron," he said in English, with his usual pompousness : "it is impossible for a lady to perambulate the vessel alone."

"Thank you ; I can walk alone."

"Ah, Miss Cameron," continued the prince, "if you would only deign to accept of my services——"

Helen cut him short :

"I had much rather be alone now."

"Your pleasure will always govern my resolutions," answered the prince, bowing very low.

He slackened his steps, but followed her none the less, watching all her movements.

Helen saw Captain Hawkins standing in the gangway, and, going boldly up to him, begged

him to take her back to Cronstadt. The captain looked into Helen's face, and asked :

“ What is the meaning of all this ? ”

Helen reflected for a moment : would it be wise to tell him the whole truth ? She looked round, to be sure that she was not overheard, and saw Prince Boriatinsky behind her. She must be dumb about the real reason.

“ I feel that I shall be very wretched if I go on with you,” she answered very vaguely.

“ This is a sudden change in your feelings, Miss Cameron,” said Captain Hawkins, looking keenly at her ; “ what has brought about the change ? ”

Helen felt, that, with Prince Boriatinsky behind her, she could give no satisfactory reason.

“ No matter what,” she said somewhat imperiously : “ it is enough that I can't go on.”

“ You are welcome to go back, Miss Cameron, if you can contrive to do so,” answered Captain Hawkins sarcastically ; “ but I can't take you back.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Why I should lose a whole day by it.”

“ My father will willingly pay for any damage you may sustain, and reward you handsomely beside,” said Helen earnestly.

It was the captain's turn to reflect. One look at his face was enough to show that greed was strong in him. The hope of reward was certainly a temptation. No bad policy, either, to make a friend of Mr. Cameron. Captain likely to be in the Baltic trade for years : the influence of a great merchant like Mr. Cameron at Petersburg might make his fortune "in no time." Worth thinking about.

At this moment he saw Prince Boriatinsky making some telegraphic signs with his hand. He did not quite understand what they meant, and checked the current of his thoughts to turn his mind to the solution of the problem. By-and-by highness shook his head ; of course that meant " no " to Miss Cameron's request. Yes, but what motive could prince bring to bear upon captain ? That was the main point. Ah, now highness was plain enough. Motive ! The highest that could move such a mind : tangible enough, too ; a bank-note for £100. Captain shakes his head : telegraph signal, meaning " not enough." Highness holds up two fingers : symbol for two £100 notes. Captain still shakes his head. Three ? No.

Though Helen could not see the prince, she began to suspect, from the captain's mysterious

winks and nods, that all was not right in that quarter. So she turned round. Highness was looking remarkably innocent: seeing that Captain Hawkins understood him, he had put back the bank-note into his pocket, and meant henceforth to telegraph only with his nimble fingers and his sapient head. Helen was puzzled: to whom had worthy captain been telegraphing, then? Any one behind the prince? None. But attention was soon called back by Captain Hawkins, who said:

“Well, Miss Cameron, I would gladly take you back.”

In plain English: “Bid higher, your Highness, or——”

Five fingers: another shake of the head.

“Oh, do go back, sir!”

“Well, I am half inclined to do so.”

Highness frantic: ten fingers!

“You will never repent it,” said Helen.

It was curious to see how suddenly the current of worthy captain's thoughts was turned backward. His former reasonings were in a moment unreasoned. Would Mr. Cameron approve of his daughter's sudden whim? He might refuse to pay either damage or reward. Indeed, might not worthy captain make an

enemy of him by complying with his daughter's wish? Truth underlying said reasoning simply this old one: "Bird in hand worth two in bush." So, without changing his tone, he said, as if he were merely completing his former sentence:

"But I am sorry to say I dare not: it is more than my place is worth, Miss Cameron."

"Could you give me one of your boats, then?"

Captain Hawkins smiled sarcastically.

"Do you propose to row yourself back all the way in such a sea as this?" he asked.

"Could you spare me one of your men?"

"Quite out of the question."

Prince Boriatinsky here stepped forward, and addressed Helen in his most winning style.

"It would afford me the profoundest satisfaction to row you back myself, since you desire so resolutely to return. I am proceeding on an important diplomatic mission to England; but I should infinitely prefer to abdicate my mission, and incur the displeasure of my sovereign, than to see you miserable."

That which, in Prince Boriatinsky's swelling language, was lifted into "an important diplo-

matic mission," was really a small affair, touching some question of army equipment.

Helen of course shrank from the very thought of being indebted to highness in any way. As she retired from the interview, vague fear filled her mind. What was to be the end of it all?

During the remainder of that day, she had nothing to complain of in the prince. He was polite and attentive, but very respectful. He seemed to be anxious that she should be not only comfortable without, but at ease within. He talked fluently, and at times really amused her. In fact, he did his best to convince her that her fears were groundless. Certain it is that she felt more at her ease at the close of that day than at the outset.

CHAPTER XII.

IN A STRAIT.

"*Lucretia.* But if one like this wretch
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power;
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble?

Orsini. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong."

• • • • •

SHELLEY: *The Cenci.*

BUT all who knew Prince Boriatinsky knew that he was capable of carrying out a cunning scheme. Not a very deep one; because he had no depth of any kind. A military tactician would have said that his present scheme was a siege carried on by slow approaches. Helen's fears had been lulled to rest, but not wholly removed. The slightest approach of danger would have renewed them; and the cunning prince was misreckoning the strength of the garrison. Her fears were soon revived. Day after day she felt that his manner toward her was growing warmer and warmer. So slow and crafty was the advance, that she could no more point out the shades of difference day by day than she could see where one colour of

a rainbow ended and another began. It was like the tide: she could not mark each encroachment; and it was only by looking back on several days that she felt the difference. But where to make a stand? She felt that a net was enclosing her, and that one day she might find herself fast in its folds.

She half resolved to remain in her berth, and not venture on deck again. But a very short time was enough to settle that experiment. It was the horror of horrors. Poor Miss Meldrum was so sick, that, though Helen visited her again and again, she had not the stomach to remain with her long at a time during the day. In the revolutionary state of her stomach, to remain altogether in the berth would be to be engulfed in all the horrors of the revolution. Anything better than that!

O that she had a gentleman to protect her! Among those "gentlemen" with whom she mingled every day, she felt that there was not a "gentleman" to whom she could appeal. Is it strange that, amidst such surroundings, her thoughts turned to Captain Maleenovsky? Oh, if *he* were there! What a sense of security she would have! With his strong, manly nature, how he would keep Prince Boriatinsky

in check ! She had never seen the two pitted against each other ; but, with the one-sidedness of love, she never doubted which would get the upper hand.

There was one other man to whom her thoughts turned at times : Joey Willing, the first mate. He was rough, coarse, and somewhat blustering, having clearly come from before the mast ; and Helen had had more than one opportunity of seeing that his nose did not bear false witness against him. But, for all that, she felt sure that he was honest ; and there was a rough kindness, and even chivalry, in his fallen nature, which made her feel inclined to trust him. Strange that a drunken sailor was the only one she could lean upon in that company of men !

Helen had always been an early riser ; and now she had a double motive for indulging in that wholesome habit. Her berth was uncomfortable, and the air stifling ; and she could always insure a few quiet hours to herself on deck before the gentlemen were up. She therefore availed herself freely of the luxury. On the morning of the 16th, she went on deck, as usual, at five o'clock, and found no one there but the steersman and the first mate.

"Good morning, miss," said Joey, with a toss of the head, which he meant for a polite bow.

"Good morning, sir," answered Helen graciously, seating herself at the side of the ship: "what a beautiful morning it is!"

Joey was a comical fellow in many ways; but one of the most comical things about him was the way in which he talked. His speech did not flow on like a stream, but came out in gulps like water from a full bottle held head downward. Having a slow brain, he could give utterance only to one thought at a time. As he could not utter, so he evidently could not digest, more than one thought at once. So he was in the habit, while talking, of walking up and down on deck, discharging a shot as he passed Helen, and receiving a shot in return. Whether it were mere habit, or whether he really wanted time to reload his gun, and repair what damage he may have sustained, he now walked away to the stern. That it was a beautiful morning, did not seem a hard thought to digest. But it may have been to him—in spite of appearances. By-and-by he returned; and there was another gulp—or shot. He said mysteriously:

"That's as may be, miss. But I say, miss, that prince of your'n be a bad 'un!"

"Mine!"

But Joey was gone again. When he came back his round, there was another shot.

"Yes, your'n: ain't ye sweet upon 'un?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Willing!"

It would be wearisome to repeat, each time, that Joey walked off, and then came back. In future, therefore, you must please to understand that every speech of his had its due peripatetic accompaniment; that each utterance came out like a shot, first mate always sheering off after delivering his broadside.

"Why, then, do ye colloque with 'un?"

Joey had a peculiar phraseology of his own.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Why, hevn't I seen ye a-sittin' side by side with 'un, like two sweethearts, makin' love, no doubt, in yer outlandish jargon?" answered Joey, standing still for a moment.

"Oh, no; you are mistaken, Mr. Willing."

"It 'ould be a pity too that a purty gal, like ye be, should throw yersen away upon a dirty for'ner who don't mean honestly by ye, no more'n Jack Straddles did when a promised to be spliced to a purty gal I knows on, while

Jack all the time had a dozen lawful wives in as many different ports."

"What am I to do?"

"Why don't ye sheer off when a comes anear ye?"

"Where can I go? I am stifled in my berth; and there's a lady there sick day and night."

"Ah, poor thing! Ye're the pictur' o' my Sal."

"Is that your wife, Mr. Willing?"

This time Joey walked away roaring with laughter. When he came back, he said:

"Wife? Noa! Wife looks like a piece of old leather by the side of the likes o' ye."

"Who is Sal, then?"

"My darter."

"But what shall I do, sir?" asked Helen:
"shall I speak to the captain?"

This time Joey had a harder problem to solve than before; and he took a proportionably longer time to ponder it. When he returned, he almost whispered:

"Capt'n be a bad 'un: don't ye go a-trusten 'un."

There were some who wondered how Captain Hawkins could allow his first mate to get drunk

so often. Joey's answer seemed to strengthen the theory which others had formed to account for the fact: namely, that there was a tacit understanding between the two that each should wink with one eye; captain, with the eye turned to first mate's drunkenness, and first mate with the eye turned to captain's rascality.

"What would you advise me to do, then?" asked Helen earnestly.

This was the hardest nut which Joey had yet to crack; and of course he was the longest about it. He walked backward and forward on the other side of the ship. Presently he looked at the compass, as if to see which way he was steering that beautiful craft, Helen Cameron. Then, as if at last he had mastered all the points of the compass, he came back, gleefully to Helen.

"If iver ye be in a strait, miss, jist call on Joey Willing," he answered; "and he'll see if a can't tug ye out again into open sea. If a don't throw that 'ere dirty for'ner on his beam-ends, he ain't Sal's fayther."

For a moment, Helen's old sprightliness overcame her anxiety. At the risk of angering her best friend on board, she laughed and said:

"What if you are drunk at the time, Mr. Willing?"

"Avast!"

What precise meaning Joey attached to this word, I never could find out. He himself called it a "permiscus" word: expressive of many different feelings; perplexity, wonder, sorrow, regret, shame, indignation, anger, horror, and alarm. One needed to look at the context, before one could understand the text. In which of these senses he used it now, it would be hard to say. Helen began to fear it was anger; because, having delivered his shot, he himself went off like a shot, and did not return for a long time. Indeed, he wandered all over the ship, as if in search of an answer. He might have had duties to discharge in the steerage; but surely he might have discharged those duties after giving his answer quite as well as before. So, on the whole, we may set him down as answer-hunting.

When he did return, there was not a trace of anger on his broad, jolly face. But there was a puzzled look, as if he were not quite sure of the answer. Had he not caught it yet? He paused so long (so unlike his usual peripatetic habits), that Helen had to put in a word:

"I hope I have not offended you, sir."

His tongue seemed to be unloosed at last.

"I'll git drunk only when ye're safe in yer berth: it 'ouldn't be in raison to give up my drink altogether for the sakes of a stranger, ye sees."

"And why not for your own sake, Mr. Willing? And why not for Sal's sake, Mr. Willing?"

"Avast!"

"Wouldn't your Sal be the better off?"

But he was off again. This time Helen thought he would never return. But after a long absence, he appeared again, and said:

"Ye 'ould be the best off. If it weren't for drink, I should now ha' been capt'n of this yere ship; and 'ouldn't I hev' given that 'ere dirty for'ner a wallopping? But I'll tell ye what it be, miss: Joey Willing be an old fool—that's what it be!"

And, before Helen could speak, he was out of hearing again. He had delivered his last broadside, and did not mean to receive another just yet.

The wind had been abating for many hours; and now there was scarcely enough to fill the sails, so that the mainsails had to be furled.

The sea, too, was much smoother ; and Helen was greatly enjoying her loneliness, when one of the gentlemen came on deck. Well, it was a bore : still it might have been worse ; because it was only Mr. Koorbaatov, the most harmless of the lot.

Mr. Koorbaatov was in the diplomatic line ; but so soft, that he was likely to be beautifully moulded like wax in the hands of a skilful counter-diplomatist. He had been smitten by Helen's charms at first sight ; but, jealous as he was of Prince Boriatinsky, he durst not for his life anger highness by talking to Helen in his presence. He used to walk about, looking as solemn as a donkey. Dandy as he was, for two whole days he had been utterly careless of his dress. He had always been proud of his knowledge of English ; but now he gloried in it as a link to Helen Cameron. He had picked up a volume of "Don Juan" out of the ship's library : and for two whole days he had sat alone in a corner poring over it ; imagining himself to be the hero, with Helen for his Haidee. He had become a laughing-stock to the "gentlemen ;" but he did not care for that, and rather gloried in his woe.

But now he came up as spruce and dandified

as at the first. He had found out that Helen was in the habit of sitting alone on deck early in the morning. Here was a chance for embryo-diplomatist! While highness was still snoring in his berth, he might meet his Haidee morning after morning, and revel undetected in her love. He hadn't the pluck to face the prince; but highness need never know. So he came up to Helen, smiling and smirking.

"Beautiful Haidee," he said, gliding into the cherished name of his day-dream, "are you cultivating your roses in the morning breeze?"

"My name is not Haidee," answered Helen; "and I left all my roses behind in my garden."

"I beg your pardon," rejoined Mr. Koorbaatov: "still, if I am too bold, it is not I but love that is guilty."

Helen felt strongly inclined to laugh; but, in her present strait, she thought she might just as well utilise the devotion of her fantastic wooer. So she said:

"Love in the olden time always expressed itself in service."

"Oh, if I could but serve you, beautiful damsel!" cried Mr. Koorbaatov.

"You could do me the greatest service."

Mr. Koorbaatov was enchanted. He sat down by Helen's side.

"Tell me what it is," he cried: "I am ready to lay down my life for you."

"I only wish you to prevent Prince Boriatinsky from persecuting me with his attentions."

Poor Mr. Koorbaatov! How chopfallen he looked! If a jet of cold water had been squirted at him, it could not have condensed his steam more thoroughly. To lay down his life (poetically) for Helen was one thing: to face Prince Boriatinsky's wrath (prosaically) was quite another.

"I will do my best," he said.

Little did he dream how soon his word was to be put to the test. He was so absorbed in Helen that he had not heard footsteps approaching. Nevertheless Prince Boriatinsky was before him. How angry he was to see one of his own suite making love to the girl whom he had avowedly set apart for his own use, may be judged from the sharp thwack of the cane which he laid smartly on the daring lover's shoulders.

"How dare you, you villain?" he cried.

Mr. Koorbaatov jumped up, smarting with pain, and meekly said:

"I beg your pardon, your Highness."

"Disappear instantly ; or I will kick you down the companion-ladder. I desire to have a private interview with Mademoiselle Cameron."

Alas for human heroism and plighted word ! Alas too for Helen Cameron's hopes of a slender shelter from the princely storm which had been pelting her so pitilessly the last few days ! Young embryo-diplomatist took to his heels as naturally as a young duckling takes to water.

"But I don't wish to have a private interview with *you*," cried Helen indignantly, rising.

"Stay, mademoiselle, I implore you."

"I won't."

And Helen was moving off, when the prince took hold of her hand.

"Let her be !" said a deep voice from behind.

"And who are you ?" asked the prince.

But the owner of the voice was not to be seen. The prince looked about, and presently saw Joey coming up to him in front.

"I be the first mate of this yere ship," said Joey.

"And how dare you interfere with me ?"

Joey had again marched off, but soon returned and answered :

"When the capt'n's asleep, I be the commander of this yere ship ; and I give ye notice,

that, if I again find ye a-puttin' yer dirty hands on that 'ere young leddy, my knuckles will git to know sum'at about that 'ere dirty face of yourn."

"I will report you to the captain."

"Ye may report me to the——, if ye likes : I know my own business ; and that's more'n ye can say, I reckon."

Highness did not like to try conclusions with first mate. To tell you the truth, Joey looked rather an ugly customer to deal with. His big chest and his brawny arms did not invite a tussle. Indeed, he had fought with champions, and, but for his proneness to drink, might himself have become the champion of England. Highness (falsely) prided himself on his bodily strength. But he did not like the looks of Joey. So he contented himself with saying :

"You'll smart for this !"

"Ay, ay, sir, when I be pickled in the same tub with ye."

In the meanwhile, Helen had taken advantage of the struggle to retire. She began to look on Joey as her champion, and became somewhat easier in her mind. Still, throughout the day, she avoided the prince as well as she could.

In the evening she went on deck again. All the gentlemen were there. She sat down in her usual seat, and looked out. They were nearly becalmed. There was not a breath of air down below: all but the topsails of the ship had been furled. The sea was so smooth that it looked like a lake of oil. Scarcely a ripple by the sides of the ship. The sun had gone down some time: still it was not dark enough to be called twilight. That calm had a charm of its own: it looked fairy-like.

"Still angry with me?" said Prince Boriatinsky, coming up to Helen: "will you deign to pardon me, mademoiselle?"

"I will forgive you if you promise never to approach me without my consent."

A promise cost highness nothing: so he readily pledged his word.

"Ah, if you knew how much I love you——"

"Is this not too public a place to talk about love in?" said Helen, laughing.

"You see, we are in solitude."

Helen looked round, and saw that the gentlemen had indeed all retired. Barring the steersman, not a living soul in sight; and steersman some way off. She began to feel uneasy: "gentlemen" must have withdrawn in accord-

ance with an understanding with highness. Helen was all the more anxious, because she had just seen Joey Willing busily confirming the testimony of his nose.

"It is time for me to retire," she said.

"Vouchsafe to remain, my adorable creature!"

And highness put his arm round her waist.

"Unhand me, sir!" cried Helen angrily.

"When you are inflamed with passion you look more magnificent than ever, *ma belle Hélène*."

"If you don't let me go, I will cry out for help."

"Of what advantage will that be, *ma charmante*? You cannot expect my own gentlemen to advocate your cause; and the captain of the vessel and his crew are my pensioners."

"Including the first mate?" said Helen.

"Your interesting champion is *hors de combat*."

Helen knew that this was true. She was in Prince Boriatinsky's power! Then, for the first time in her life, perhaps, the thought of a Saviour-God came upon her mind as a reality. All that she had learnt from childhood of a great and good Father in heaven, but which

had hitherto seemed to her a mere theory, started out now as a tangible fact.

“God help me!” she cried. “Help! help!”

She cried out so loud, that even highness was startled. But, just as she was losing heart and hope, his grasp was suddenly relaxed; and she found herself free. A strong arm from behind had shaken him off; and—CAPTAIN MALEENOVSKY stood before her.

Could she believe her eyes? How could he have come there? Had he dropped down from the clouds? Had a great fish picked him Jonah-fashion? Had he wings like a dove? Was it his ghost?

“There is nothing to fear now, mademoiselle,” said Captain Maleenovsky, bowing very low.

His voice assured her that it was indeed he. And then came a great recoil of feeling within her. The bow had been over-bent; and it sprang back with a clang. She burst into tears, and sobbed aloud. She took hold of his arm, and clung to him, quivering and trembling. If she had obeyed the prompting of her heart, she might have fallen on his neck and kissed him. After the horrors of the last few days, what a blessed sense of security his very presence inspired!

"Thank God you are here!" she cried, still clinging to his arm: "how shall I ever thank you, my noble protector?"

"It is but a trifle," answered Maleenovsky coldly: "there is nothing to fear."

Oh, so cold! When her heart was well-nigh bursting with thankfulness and love! Not the faintest response to her feeling! Nothing but the most freezing courtesy! What was that mysterious something which stood as a barrier between them? A crime? He a criminal? That noble champion of hers a man worthy of death? Ridiculous! What was it, then? Would she ever know?

When Helen sat down, the prince strutted up to Captain Maleenovsky, foaming and boiling with rage.

"How dare you?" he cried.

"Pshaw!" answered the captain scornfully: "it does not need much courage to grapple with a man who is coward enough to attack a lady."

"You shall smart for this!"

"Very likely," answered Maleenovsky coolly.

"You have forgotten your place, sir: you are under my orders, sir!"

"As regards our mission, yes: in no other respect, your Highness. I am ready to obey

all your orders as my chief; but your office neither shields you from my criticism on your behaviour as a gentleman, nor gives you any authority on my conduct as a man."

"Get out of my sight!" shouted the prince.

"We are not babies," answered Maleenovsky calmly, but scornfully: "after what has passed, it would be childish in you to think that I shall ever leave this young lady in your power again."

"You shall smart for this!"

"Very likely."

"You shall hear from me through a friend."

"Very well."

This threat of a duel filled Helen with dismay. No need for her to be alarmed. Gallant captain knew what he was about: he had made his resolve; and, come what might, he would stand by it. Indeed, it was hard to know what to do with him. Prince Boriatinsky gnashed his teeth as he thought of this fresh obstacle in his path. Captain, as firm as a rock, and seemingly as cold and impassive too: prince's rage broke against him as harmlessly as the waves against a crag. Captain would not give way: so prince had to retire and leave the spoil in the enemy's hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

CIRCUMSTANCES.

"O well for him whose will is strong ;
He suffers, but he will not suffer long ;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong :
For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
Nor all Calamity's huge waves confound,
Who seems a promontory of rock,
That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd."

TENNYSON: *Will.*

If the appearance of Captain Maleenovsky awakened any fond hopes in Helen's breast, they were doomed to disappointment. He behaved kindly and courteously to her ; but that was all. There was in him such a stern adherence to stiff etiquette, such a scrupulous keeping up of the distance between them, that she felt, in many respects, farther off from him than ever. And yet she loved him more passionately than before. He was a puzzle to her. Did he love her at all ? Had he ever loved her ?

The following morning, when she went on deck as usual, she found Captain Maleenovsky already there. He looked as calm and unruffled as ever ; and there was no trace of any struggle

that might have been going on within him during the night. Could he have come into such close contact with her again without having been tempted again to claim her as his own? Ay, struggle there might have been: but, if so, he had conquered; and I fancy that, after this, nothing could have betrayed him into the weakness of which he had been guilty once.

As soon as he saw her, he came up. Helen blushed, and held out her hand. Did he remark how particularly lovely she looked this morning? She was glowing with pleasure; and the sea-breezes had restored a good deal of the bloom to her cheeks.

"Good morning, mademoiselle," he said calmly, shaking hands with her.

Oh, so cold! Could he forget that he had once held her in his arms, and folded her to his heart?

"How did you come here last night?" asked Helen, after returning his greeting: "did you drop down from the clouds?"

"Not exactly," answered Captain Maleevsky smiling: "I rather came up out of the depths."

"Then it was after all a great fish that swallowed you and spued you out?"

"I came up out of the depths of my berth."

"Have you been on board all the time then?"

"Certainly, mademoiselle."

"How is it I have not seen you before?"

"The day we started from Cronstadt, I saw you coming up out of the cabin: and, as happily, you had not seen me, I resolved that you should never know of my presence; and I should have kept my resolve, too, had I not heard your cries for help last night."

"But why?"

"Oh, mademoiselle, can you ask me why? After the weakness into which I fell before you once, I knew that the very sight of me would make you uneasy."

"Are you ever sea-sick?"

"Sometimes."

He did not add that he had been suffering a living martyrdom for her in his berth. But Helen guessed it all: the heroic self-sacrifice of the man; contrasting so nobly with Prince Boriatinsky's brutal selfishness. Her eyes were moist; and her voice was husky and shaky when she spoke.

"God bless you!" she said. "But, oh, how you have misjudged me!"

"I think not, mademoiselle."

"It seems as if I were destined to be indebted to you at every step, without ever being able to pay any part of the debt!" cried Helen with deep feeling.

"Ah, mademoiselle, I can never do enough to atone for that fatal false step I took; and, if you can only learn to forget that, I shall deem the debt fully paid."

Generous; but, oh, so cold! Helen had never before realised so fully that it was indeed all over between them; that the mysterious something, whatever it was, was a barrier which could not be overleapt. If it were so, doubtless it was best and kindest to her that he should be so plain. This morning, and the night before, he had noticed that there was need for plainness of speech: that she was still cherishing hopes which could not be fulfilled. But, oh, the sinking of heart; the coldness and dreariness she felt within!

"At least," she said, "you will not needlessly add to the debt by risking your life for me in a duel with Prince Boriatinsky."

"Mademoiselle may be quite sure that I will not needlessly risk my life till she is safe among her friends in England."

Helen's eyes filled with tears again ; and, when she tried to speak, she broke down.

"No, no !" she said at length. "I do not mean for my sake : I mean for your own sake."

"It matters little what becomes of me, mademoiselle."

"It matters much to *me*," said Helen warmly.

"When one is friendless and alone, the meanest human being seems welcome."

"I am not so friendless here as you imagine : I have made a friend of the first mate."

"Why did he not appear last night ?"

"You know the proverb : 'When the drink comes in, the brain goes out.'"

"Oh, it is that drunken brute ?"

"Yes, but an honest one."

"Such sots are good for nothing at a pinch, mademoiselle."

Helen smiled archly for the first time that morning, and looked more like her old self than she had done for many a day, as she said :

"But do you know ? I have another friend here."

"Who is that, mademoiselle ?"

"A Mr. Koorbaatov."

"Ah! Milksons are worth as little as sots at a pinch."

I don't know what had come over Helen this morning: whether it were the pure love of mischief, at one time so strong in her; or whether she wanted to bring Captain Maleenovsky's feelings to the test of jealousy. She went on to say, still with an arch look:

"And do you know? He has been making love to me."

Captain Maleenovsky looked at her keenly, as if to find out her aim in uttering those words. But there was not the slightest change in his own face: neither wonder, nor sorrow, nor annoyance, nor anger, could she see written there. Simply the same strong, striking face, which had won her love of old.

"If I were not quite sure that no milkson could ever win your love, mademoiselle," he said, smiling gently, "I might think it my duty to warn you that you want a strong-minded man for your husband."

While Captain Maleenovsky was yet speaking, the subject of their conversation thrust his head from out of the cabin. He seemed surprised, and by no means pleased, to see another gentleman forestalling him in his

morning treat with Helen. But he walked straight up to them, smirking and smiling as usual.

"Good morning, Miss Cameron," he said : "I hope I do not interrupt you in a very interesting employment."

"You are far too profound for me—as usual," retorted Helen.

Mr. Koorbaatov turned to Captain Maleenovsky, and said in French :

"I come to you, monsieur, on behalf of his highness, Prince Boriatinsky."

"I shall be most happy to hear your message, monsieur," answered Captain Maleenovsky.

"It is scarcely fit for a lady's ear ; and therefore I will thank you to walk on with me."

"I know what it is," cried Helen ; "and, as I am the cause of the quarrel, I want to hear the message."

Mr. Koorbaatov answered Helen in English : always proud of showing off his accomplishment.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Cameron. But really you should not hear it : it is what you call a challenge."

"I insist on hearing it."

"I never could resist a beautiful lady," said Mr. Koorbaatov, smirking and smiling; "and I obey your command." Then, turning to Captain Maleenovsky, he continued in French: "His highness requires you to apologise for the insult you offered him last night, or else to give him the satisfaction of a gentleman."

"Tell his highness that I will not apologise for protecting a lady from his violence, and that I will not risk my life till I have seen this lady safe among her friends in England. After that, I will give him satisfaction."

"Do you know the construction which will be put on your conduct in our circle?"

"No."

"They will ascribe it to cowardice."

"None that knows me will do that," answered Captain Maleenovsky proudly; "and, if you report my answer faithfully, even those who do not know me will see that I have sufficient cause for refusing to fight for the present. Do *you* ascribe my refusal to cowardice?"

"No, monsieur."

"But, if they do, I can bear it with tolerable equanimity."

"But you are scarcely aware, monsieur, what advantage his highness may take of your refusal," continued Mr. Koorbaatov in a friendly tone.

"What will he do?"

"He will insult you openly."

"Let him insult me as much as he likes, so long as he does not insult this lady. I am a man; and I know how to defend myself."

"Is this your final answer?"

"Certainly."

"I am sorry for it on your account: you know the feeling on the subject in the army better than I."

"Never fear," answered Maleenovsky: "my reputation will take care of itself. But of yourself, monsieur: you surely do not abet his highness in his outrage on Mademoiselle Cameron."

"If you walk on with me, I will explain my position," answered Mr. Koorbaatov.

As he clearly did not like to do so in Helen's hearing, she turned away, and sat down near the wheel, while the gentlemen walked backward and forward on the deck.

In a few minutes Helen saw Mr. Koorbaatov go down to the cabin; and Captain

Maleenovsky walked up toward her. But, before he could reach her, he met Joey Willing, and began to speak to him. Joey, according to his wont, having delivered his broadside, went off like a shot; but Captain Maleenovsky accommodated himself to his peripatetic style, and soon overtook him. So the two walked fiercely side by side, as if they were on a walking-match. But, every now and then, when they came nearest to her, Helen heard scraps of their talk. In one of these approaches, she heard Joey say:

“Let her be, I say! I’ll not allow ne’er a for’ner on ye all to touch her.”

“But I—her friend.”

“Ay, so ye all say: that dirty prince of yourn was her friend, too! I guess as ye be all in the same boat.”

Helen overtook them, and said:

“I am much obliged to you, Mr. Willing, for keeping your promise to me yesterday.”

The old sailor hung down his head, and looked thoroughly ashamed of himself.

“I’ll tell ye what it were, miss,” he answered awkwardly: “that ’ere dirty for’n prince wanted me to drink sum’at to his health; and I had a drop too much.”

"And he took advantage of that to insult me. Oh, Mr. Willing, I wanted your help very much!"

"So I heer'd from old Jack, who were at the wheel. I were ready to cut my tongue out, when I heer'd on it, miss!"

"But, happily, an old friend of mine, Captain Maleenovsky, turned up just in time."

They had been walking up and down; and there had been a longer or shorter pause before each of Joey's shots. But, this time, he paused so long, that Helen thought his ammunition was exhausted. However, by-and-by, there was another broadside.

"Don't ye go a-trusten any on these for'ners, miss: they're a bad lot; ivery one on 'em!"

"But Captain Maleenovsky is a very old friend; and he is the only man that I can trust here."

"Ay, ay, miss!" said Joey, deeply mortified: "I see how it be: no wonder ye don't trusten an old fool like me. But may my Sal niver have a babby if——"

"Don't swear, Mr. Willing," interrupted Helen. "I believe I can trust you in future; and then I shall have two to rely on, which

will be all the better. But I wish you would trust in Captain Maleenovsky. You would work all the better, if you worked together."

"I'll tell'ee what, miss," answered Joey: "I'll watch 'un; and, if so be as he be a good 'un, he won't have to say that Joey Willin' despised him 'cause he were a for'ner."

That was as much as Helen could get out of Joey in the present state of his "innards" (as he called it): so she left him; and, as the gentlemen began to come up on deck, she went below.

The wind had been rising for some hours; and the sea had become rougher than they had known it yet. Poor Miss Meldrum felt the change, and was in a dreadful way. Helen waited on her, and did her best to cheer her up. But she was past all comfort: she had even passed the stage of wishing to die, and was in that state of prostration, in which it is a matter of utter indifference whether you live or die, and you wish simply to be let alone. After awhile, Helen herself began to feel sick, and was forced to go into the open air.

The ship rolled so much, that she could scarcely walk along. She managed, however,

to reach her usual seat at the side, and sat down, feeling very squeamish. Most of the gentlemen were in the same state as herself. But three of them, including Captain Maleenovsky, who were well-seasoned, were in a group talking. Captain Maleenovsky stood with his back to her; and Prince Boriatinsky sat opposite, evidently not feeling "all right." After looking at them for a moment, Helen shut her eyes, and lapsed into that half-dreamy state, in which the sound of their voices came into her ears, without leaving any definite idea of what they said. They evidently had not seen her come; because none of them moved as they always did when she approached. So she saw without being seen.

By-and-by, she heard something which interested her; and she listened more attentively, though she shut her eyes again. The next speaker was Mr. Kaloshnikov, Commissary-General of Poland, whom the Grand Duke Constantine had sent to co-operate with Prince Boriatinsky on behalf of Poland in the mission to England. An elderly man, with a ferret-face, and a sharp, shrewd, lawyer-like mind, somewhat conceited as well as pompous.

"I say that the man makes the circumstances, and not the circumstances the man," he said. "Just think of Peter the Great: why, circumstances were all against him; but he moulded them according to his own mind, and forced events to do his bidding."

"I differ from you there," answered Mr. Koorbaatov: "we have not all got the genius of Peter the Great; and we are merely tossed backward and forward, as events turn out."

Was he thinking that circumstances hindered him from making love to Helen Cameron?

"Exactly," rejoined Mr. Kaloshnikov: "you are only confirming what I say. If we had more genius and courage, we too should control events, as Peter the Great did. What does your honour say?" he added, addressing Captain Maleenovsky: "does the man make the circumstances, or the circumstances the man?"

"I agree with your excellency in the main," answered Maleenovsky: "still, I should say that neither *makes* the other."

"What, then?"

"They act and react on each other; and

their relative influence will depend on the strength of the man."

"Ah, then," thought Helen, "*you* will prove stronger than the adverse circumstances which surround us."

"It would be absurd to maintain that the strongest man would not be somewhat different, if he were placed in different circumstances," continued Maleenovsky: "but the stronger he is inwardly; the more power he has in brain and heart and will;—the less he will be affected by circumstances, and the more he will influence the course of events. If Martin Luther had lived in another age of the world's history, I daresay he would not have been just the man that he was; but, whenever and wherever he might have lived, he must have been felt as a power in the world, and must have left his mark upon his age."

"An admirable illustration!" exclaimed Mr. Kaloshnikov: "almost as good as my Peter the Great."

Captain Maleenovsky went on to say:

"Circumstances are just the raw material, out of which we weave the fabric of our history; and the worth of the fabric will correspond to the joint worth of the material and the workman."

"Exactly," cried Mr. Koorbaatov: "you can make nothing out of some materials."

"Ay, but some men can turn out a better article from bad material than others from good," answered Captain Maleenovsky: "nay, if we make the best of the *worst* materials, we may weave a more beautiful fabric than many a man does out of the *best*. The great thing is not to allow ourselves to be tamely moulded by circumstances, but to assert our right as MEN to mould circumstances according to our own pattern."

"But surely there are some circumstances which you cannot control."

"No: whatever circumstances may be in themselves, as soon as they come into contact with a strong man, they will catch the tone of his character."

"What say you to death?" asked Mr. Koorbaatov.

He said this triumphantly, with the air of a man who was about to crush his antagonist at one blow. Indeed, it was the strongest illustration he could think of; and he felt sure that Captain Maleenovsky would be staggered by it. But the captain quietly answered:

"And can you not turn death itself from a

defeat into a victory by the courage and heroism with which you meet it? As I said before, all will depend on the strength of the man. There are some men who are always overcome by circumstances. But there are others who always master circumstances, however unfavourable they may be. They may be beaten for a time; but they always rise again, and succeed in the long run."

"Admirably put!" exclaimed Mr. Kaloshnikov: "I could not have put it better myself."

"That you could not," answered Mr. Koorbaatov, with more frankness than the veteran statesman relished. "But, though I feel the force of Captain Maleenovsky's reasoning, I am not quite convinced by it. There are things in ourselves which incline us to bow to circumstances."

"That is what I have admitted all along," answered Captain Maleenovsky: "I have been contending that the victory will depend on the strength of the man."

"But what are we to do with these traitors in the camp?"

"If you are weak, you will harbour them; but, if you are strong, you will master them."

"For example, there are such things as feelings."

"Our business is to do the right, and *crush* feeling, if it stand in the way."

Captain Maleenovsky said this with a feeling and an energy which he had not hitherto shown in the conversation. It sounded as if he were telling a chapter out of his own experience. And he laid an emphasis on the word "*crush*," which drove it home to poor Helen's heart. She had opened her eyes but a moment before; and, looking at him from behind, she could see him clench his fist, as if unconsciously symbolising the word "*crush*." Could she doubt that the speech had come from his heart and from his life?

These thoughts, which have taken me I don't know how many seconds to write down, darted in one moment through Helen's brain, and did not hinder her from following the thread of the conversation. She was anxious not to lose any part of it, lest she should not take in the whole of Captain Maleenovsky's meaning.

"You look like a man who had no feelings to crush," answered Mr. Koorbaatov, not without a touch of admiration.

"Except that of *fear*," sneered Prince Boriatinsky.

Helen was curious to know how Captain Maleenovsky would receive this insult. A soldier himself, could he help resenting it? He simply took no notice of it; passed it by in contemptuous silence. Was this the way in which he was going to "defend himself" against Prince Boriatinsky's "insults"? It was all very well for once; but could he keep it up? Was he strong enough to master circumstances *so*; to turn seeming "defeat" into real "victory" in this novel fashion?

"Ah, how much you misjudge me!" he said to Mr. Koorbaatov. "I am naturally a man of strong feelings: it is true I may have learnt to master them more than some."

"That's true enough," said Mr. Kaloshnikov.

"But it is only by terrible struggle: it is not so very long since I gave way to my feelings in a way which I can never forgive, or atone for, as long as I live."

Oh, if Captain Maleenovsky could have known that Helen Cameron was listening to him! Helen was more touched than she liked to own. Of course, he was thinking of the rapturous kiss in the flood!

"What does your Highness think on the subject?" asked Mr. Kaloshnikov, turning to Prince Boriatinsky.

"I think you have all lost sight of God in the discussion," answered the prince, glibly enough: "you talk of mastering circumstances and controlling events; and, all the time, you appear to be oblivious of the fact, that you are impotent without the co-operation of Divine energy."

"God forbid that I should forget that!" cried Captain Maleenovsky solemnly, reverently baring his head. "When I talk of being strong, I take for granted that God gives us the strength. But I don't like to talk too freely of HIM in a mixed company: there are some men, before whom even to mention that awful and reverent name seems to me very much like taking it in vain."

It may seem strange that the religious element should have been brought into the conversation by a man like Prince Boriatinsky. But we must not forget that the pious zeal of the Emperor Alexander had made a profession of religion fashionable at the Russian Court. No doubt there were many truly pious and earnest men around the Tzar. But there were also

many hypocrites and canters ; and many besides, who, though not consciously false, had fallen into the habit of talking more glibly on religious subjects than their own deepest feelings would have warranted.

In this way, religious talk had become a fashionable accomplishment at Court. Perhaps the name of God was oftener used among the higher classes than at any time since the seventeenth century. But, if the matter had been sifted to the bottom, it would have come out that most of them were practical infidels ; that the thought of God did not enter into their every-day doings and thinkings. Too many of them had the name of God in their mouth without having any idea to answer to it in their mind. The name of "The All" was to them the name of "Nothing." *Vox et præterea nihil.*

There was nothing more in the conversation worth recording. But what I have reported made a deep impression on Helen. Indeed, it was the beginning of a new era in her life. While she could not help feeling that Captain Maleenovsky looked and talked like a king among his companions, she resolved to crush her love for him if she could.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLOT.

"Being thus benetted round with villains,
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play."

SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*.

BUT, though Helen had resolved to crush her love, she found it hard to do. The question came again and again: why? What made it needful? What was that mysterious something which sundered her from Captain Maleenovsky! A crime? The very thought looked absurd in the light which had been thrown on his character within the last few hours. And, yet, what motive could he have for blackening his own character? Hah, could it be that his present nobleness was but an atonement for that past crime? The idea is far-fetched enough; and, yet, there are moods of mind, and phases of character, to which it seems natural and just.

I once had a noble friend: the most faultless man I have ever known. Under a strong sense of duty, he had given up the most brilliant

prospects in this country, and devoted himself to the life of a missionary ; refusing to receive a farthing's pay from any society, and living on his own means. For more than twenty years he had worked with a heroic self-sacrifice rarely surpassed. What motive ? Many theories had been formed to account for his life. The one which found the readiest acceptance among the heathen who daily watched his life of heroic devotion, was this : that he had been guilty of some dreadful crime in his own country, and was making an atonement for it. That was the theory most in keeping with their " theory of the universe !"

In the meanwhile, Captain Maleenovsky, utterly unconscious of the thoughts he was awakening in Helen's mind, went on his way, bearing his self-appointed burden. He had fallen into a fatherly way of treating the English girl. He was very kind and gentle with her. But there was something in his manner which said : " I draw the line here ; not a step beyond !" He could not have been many years older than Helen ; and yet Helen already looked up to him with something like childlike reverence mingled with her love. She *could* have flirted with other young men ; but

the idea of flirting with Captain Maleenovsky would have been out of the question. And then the way in which he waited upon her! Her every want was forestalled; and, in spite of her sickness, she was made to feel more comfortable than she had been since the voyage began. To see him hanging over her with fatherlike gentleness, tucking her in and covering her with rugs, and yet in his whole tone and manner proclaiming to the world: "I treat her as I would treat a daughter of my own; and, as long as I am here, I will protect her against all comers!" It was quite a study.

And didn't he shield her most thoroughly? For Prince Boriatinsky, or for any one else, to outrage her in his presence would have been quite out of the question. Helen could not but admire the mastery he wielded over others. He was under Prince Boriatinsky's orders; and yet, though the prince clearly hated him, and would have been glad to do him harm, he himself was kept in order by the plain captain. Captain Maleenovsky seemed to lay down the law, and give the tone, to that company of gentlemen; most of whom were older, richer, and higher-ranked than himself.

Again and again Prince Boriatinsky tried to

annoy Captain Maleenovsky; but, up to this time, without the slightest success. He hinted, as broadly as he could, that gallant captain was a coward; but gallant captain stuck to the plan he had laid down, and simply took no notice of what highness said. At least a hundred times, during that day, highness repeated his hint: till at length, by mere force of repetition, it began to sound like a joke, and to set the gentlemen laughing—not at Captain Maleenovsky. Throughout, gallant captain looked as calm and unruffled as if there were no highness in being.

What Helen thought of it all may be seen from a few words which passed between her and gallant captain in the evening. Captain Maleenovsky was standing before her, urging her to go to her berth. All the other gentlemen had already retired, after laughing at one of Prince Boriatinsky's coarsest taunts.

"If you think I ought, I'll go," said Helen; "though I do enjoy being alone on deck after all the gentlemen have retired. But I cannot go before I have told you how thankful I feel. Oh, Captain Maleenovsky, I can't tell you how glad I am that you are here! How nobly you have been acting the whole of the day! I did

not believe that you could have borne with his dastardly taunts so long."

The tears were in her eyes; and her face was glowing with love. Captain Maleenovsky received her thanks very coldly—almost ungraciously.

"There isn't much credit due to me," he answered; "because I have no choice, mademoiselle. When death stares one in the face, one readily submits to amputation. If you were not here, I should certainly chastise his insolence: so, you see, the credit is due, not to me, but to the necessity of the case."

I fear this view of the case did not lessen Helen's admiration. The tears were streaming down her cheeks as she said:

"To submit to the imputation of cowardice for my sake!"

"You exaggerate your obligation to me, mademoiselle: do you think any one here believes me to be a coward?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Helen: "it needed the noblest courage to act as you have done!"

"Then you see, mademoiselle, I suffer no harm."

"But when you might shrivel him with a

few of the keen cutting words which you know so well how to use !”

“The use of them would lead to a quarrel, mademoiselle : the very thing I mean to avoid as long as I can. That is what his highness is aiming at ; because, if there were a quarrel, I might be put out of the way.”

“Then what would become of me ?” cried Helen, shuddering. “God bless you, and preserve you ! Good-night !”

She held out her hand, which he just touched with his palm, and then walked off to her berth.

Captain Maleenovsky was left alone on deck. Then, indeed, he gave way to a burst of feeling which showed that he had not yet learnt fully to carry out his own theory of “doing the right and crushing feeling if it stood in the way.” Whether he seriously thought the feeling right is more than I can say. His thoughts might have shaped themselves into the following words :

“O God, how long is this to last ? How long am I to act a part, and hide my feelings ? Ah, this is a weary, weary world ! Wrong lordling it over right everywhere ! I am tired —tired ! I should like to lie down and die ! The villain ! The dastardly coward ! Wait

till we are in England: see if I don't teach you to insult ladies, and take advantage of a gentleman's determination to protect them! I'll be even with you yet!"

Well, you see, he had not yet learnt the noble lesson of Christian forgiveness. He was but a devout pagan after all.

After cooling himself by a quiet walk on deck, he went down to his berth. All the gentlemen, who shared his cabin with him, were fast asleep; and he was about to follow their example, when he thought he heard suppressed voices near. He listened: they came from beyond the head of his berth. The captain's cabin was next door; and he was not surprised that one of the voices clearly belonged to Captain Hawkins. But the other? Unmistakably Prince Boriatinsky's. Prince Boriatinsky and Captain Hawkins in private conference at that hour of the night. Highly suspicious!

He took out of his pocket one of those wonderful penknives, made at Sheffield, then puffed off as comprising a chest of tools in their small compass ("one of the wonders of the world"); and, unclasping a gimlet, bored a hole in the panel at the top of his berth. Unluckily he could see nothing: but he could hear a good

deal; and that made amends for all. Sometimes, indeed, the words were lost; but the drift of the talk was clear enough. Highness nearly inaudible; most likely had his back turned to gallant captain. But Hawkins made up for it.

"What are you going to do with *him*?" Captain Hawkins was saying. "Drug his drink?"

"Oh, you villain!" thought Maleenovsky: "that's your game is it? But I'll match you yet."

He could not hear the prince's answer. Hawkins went on to say:

"He is too wide awake to be so easily caught. You'll pick a quarrel with him? More easily said than done. Your Highness has been trying to do that the whole day; and you haven't succeeded yet. He *won't* quarrel; and you can't make him." Answer again inaudible. "We are alone; and there's no use in our trying to humbug ourselves. The truth won't cost us a farthing; and a lie won't gain us one. Your *calling* him a coward won't *make* him one. We have to face this fact; that we are dealing with about the coolest, bravest, most determined man you or I ever met."

Boriatinsky's answer must have been an amusing one : for Captain Hawkins laughed ; not an honest outspoken ha-ha-ha, but a low, suppressed, chuckling he-he-he ! "Well, certainly, you *could* do that : a baby could cane a giant. But I would not advise your Highness to try. There is another thing to be thought of——"

Whether Captain Hawkins lowered his voice, or turned away his head, Maleenovsky could not say ; but for the first time he lost a part of his speech, and evidently a very important part. After a while the voice swelled out again :

"To-morrow is the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, and I give a banquet in the evening. My first mate is sure to be dead drunk. My second mate we can trust."

More words were spoken ; but none to throw fresh light on the plans of the two worthies. Soon after, Prince Boriatinsky retired.

After what he had heard, Maleenovsky felt as if he could not sleep. But he had not slept the night before ; and, if he meant to have the full use of all his powers, as he must to defeat the plot, he must take some rest. So he willed to sleep ; and he fell asleep. There were few things which that iron will could not accomplish.

After sleeping soundly, he awoke early in the morning, greatly refreshed, and went on deck. Helen had not made her appearance yet; and he could see no one but the man at the wheel. He wished to sound some of the crew, and see whether he could reckon on help in case of need. So he spoke to the steersman: warily, vaguely, revealing nothing. He did not get much by it. Steersman not going to meddle in any affair that was not his own: capt'n had a trick of pulling a man up short, if he stood in his way; putting him in limbo, and giving him a taste of rope's end in lieu of cat-o'-nine-tails. For'ner had better mind his own business. He was a man-o'-war's-man—*he* was; and he knew that discipline must be kept up.

Captain Maleenovsky was so disheartened by his failure, that he resolved to give up his attempt on the crew. Walking up and down the deck, he planned the counterplot. Joey Willing must be let into the secret. But, above all, he himself must maintain unruffled composure: must not give highness the smallest loophole of an opening for a quarrel. Not much fear of anything but a surprise. He was not sorry to see Joey come on deck

before Helen had appeared. The first mate looked at him keenly for a moment, jerked his head by way of a nod, and curtly bade him good morning. Maleenovsky walked by the old sailor's side, and tried to draw him into conversation. He found it hard, till he mentioned Helen Cameron's name. Then Joey pricked up his ears, and was all "attention." Step by step, Maleenovsky repeated the conversation he had overheard, in low, deep tones.

"And now, Mr. Willing," he ended by saying, "will you promise to remain not-intoxicated!"

"May my Sal be spliced to a dirty for'ner, if so be as I gits drunk agin as long as miss be on board!" was Joey's emphatic answer. "But if so be as I keeps sober so long, Capt'n, won't the —— capt'n begin to smoke sum'at?"

Captain Maleenovsky was puzzled.

"Smoke?" he cried. "Cigars? Does he not smoke never, except when you not-intoxicated?"

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared the old tar. "I sees as how you don't take me in, Capt'n."

Captain Maleenovsky was again bewildered.

"Take you in? You too big for me to take you in, my friend."

Joey roared again, ready to split his sides.

"I means," he said at length: "won't capt'n be ready to suspect sum'at, if as how he see me sober so long?"

"Ah, I never thought of that."

"Shall I sham the half-seas-over?"

"I not understand you, my friend: how you shame the sea, or even half the sea?"

"Ho, ho, ho! I means: shall I purtend to be drunk?"

"An excellent plan, if you can do it."

"Do it!" exclaimed Joey: "why, it come nat'ral like to me, as I may say."

"And now, my friend," continued Captain Maleenovsky, "I very sorry that I a poor man, and cannot reward you: but Miss Cameron's father, he very rich; and he will not forget you."

To Captain Maleenovsky's astonishment, the old sailor doubled up his fists, and placed himself in a fighting attitude.

"D'ye mean to insult me?" he cried.

"No."

Joey Willing was off like a shot: gallant captain wondering how he had offended him;

the idea of a drunken sailor deeming himself insulted by the promise of a reward never entering his brain. Presently the old tar returned, and delivered his broadside :

“D’ye think as I stands by a honest gal for the sakes of dirty pay ? She be the pictur’ of my Sal !”

“What fists !” cried Maleenovsky, really admiring the pair which Joey owned.

“Ay, ay, Capt’n,” answered Joey : “they’ve floored a champing afore now ; and they may floor a prince yet, in case as it falls to be necess’ry.”

Captain Maleenovsky thought that they might really prove serviceable in case of a collision with Messrs. Prince, Hawkins, and Co.

At this moment he saw Helen coming up to him, and, leaving Joey, accosted her. She looked paler than she had done the last day or two ; and, as he had not heard of her illness at St. Petersburg, he attributed her paleness to anxiety and dread. The thought strengthened his resolve not to alarm her by the slightest hint of the plot, but to set her on her guard in a general way. But how to do it ?

"Can you trust me thoroughly, mademoiselle?" he asked.

Helen wondered what could be his aim in asking such a question at such a time. Still she answered promptly:

"Thoroughly!"

"Do you trust me enough to give me a promise in the dark; to promise me to do something without asking why?"

Well, it was very strange! Still she answered, looking straight into his face with her large blue eyes:

"If you wished me to jump into the sea, I should do it without asking why."

What Captain Maleenovsky thought of her blind devotion, we can only guess. He suddenly turned away from her; so that she had only a passing glimpse of something like a sudden trouble in his face. When he turned again, his face was quite calm, and his manner as cold and polite as ever. He bowed very low, and said:

"Mademoiselle, I humbly thank you for your confidence."

"I trust you so thoroughly, that I can't take your own word against yourself," answered Helen.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Captain Maleenovsky, looking somewhat perplexed.

Helen's answer was given in a low voice ; but there was a tone of suppressed passion in it, which was calculated to thrill him through and through.

"I never will believe that you are a criminal !"

Captain Maleenovsky found it needful to turn away again. What business he had at the stern, he himself knew best. Having done it, whatever it was, he came back to Helen, looking as calm and cold as ever. But his voice quivered, when he said :

"If you pity me, mademoiselle, do not allude to that painful past. God knows I have bitterly rued the madness of a moment, and have done my best to atone for that fatal mistake."

"Still, monsieur, it would be infinitely more satisfactory to me if you could be a little more explicit ; if you could frankly tell me the nature of the crime, as you call it."

"Spare me, mademoiselle !" cried Captain Maleenovsky in a voice of agony : "I am trying to do my duty ; but I am only a weak,

erring man; and I find it hard to resist temptation."

What temptation? To another crime? Helen could not say: she found herself wholly in the dark. She saw his agony; and she would not press him any more. The chance of finding out the mysterious something passed out of her hands.

Just then Mr. Koorbaatov appeared on deck, and put a stop to the confidential talk.

The day passed away without any striking event. The prince was insulting as usual to Maleenovsky; and gallant captain as usual bore the insults meekly. Highness deeply chagrined, but not in despair. Had he not in reserve—the cane?

At length the time for the banquet came. The guests took their seats at the long table in the cabin. Maleenovsky watched Messrs. Prince and Hawkins closely. Not a word, not a gesture, not a movement, escaped him. Winks, nods, movements of the hands, so slight that he would have overlooked them at any other time, became marked and eloquent when read in the light of the night before.

When the eating was over, the drinking

went on in right earnest. Captain Maleenovsky saw, to his sorrow, that Joey Willing filled his glass oftener than anyone else. Alas for a drunkard's promise ! Alas, too, for "the pictur' of Sal !"

Helen retired before the toasts began. Maleenovsky took her vacant seat, next Captain Hawkins, who was in the chair, and opposite to highness. After the health of the "King" and the "Emperor" had been insured, highness rose to propose: "The Memory of Waterloo."

His speech was a queer sample of oratory. Waterloo was, on the whole, a creditable affair ; very decent indeed. Still it was but one, and not by many chalks the most important, of many events which made up the late war. Which of the allies had distinguished itself the most ? Let the hurling back of Napoleon, with the largest army he had ever gathered around him, by the undaunted courage of a brave, devoted people, bear witness ! *That* was the real defeat of Napoleon ; Waterloo, but the laying out of his corpse. Reynard had been run down by the greatest sportsman of the age ; and, while he was busy taking the life, a clever rival had

snipped off the brush, and worn it in his cap ever since.

During the speech, Maleenovsky had glanced at Joey several times. Glass after glass had disappeared: bottle had a propensity to stick by first mate. Wine seemingly telling on old tar: movements becoming unsteady; first mate rolling in his chair in a way suggestive of rolling *off* it. When highness ended, he rose, but reeled so much, that Maleenovsky thought he could not stand on his legs. However, he steadied himself by the table, and began to speak; but with voice so thick, and utterance so indistinct, that few could make out what he said. To this effect:

"I say, all that 'ere be a —— lie from fust to last!"

Then he rolled back into his seat, and refilled his glass.

"Gentlemen, fill your glasses," said Hawkins: "I have a toast to propose—his highness, Prince Boriatinsky."

Saying which, he replenished Captain Maleenovsky's glass; *not* from the same decanter as his own: Maleenovsky noticed it, and, while Hawkins was speaking, cleverly changed glasses with him.

Joey Willing once more drew all eyes to himself. Throughout the speech, glass after glass had disappeared as usual: first mate must have stowed away three or four bottles somewhere about his capacious person. As soon as the speech was ended, he rose as before, only reeling still more: utterance choked, not only by thickness of voice, but by the unmistakable hiccup which accompanied nearly every other word.

“I say it is (hiccup) all bosh (hiccup),” he said: “I say, Capt’n (hiccup), ain’t ye (hiccup) a-comin’ it too strong (hiccup)?”

And first mate reeled and plunged forward, and then quietly settled down under the table. How highness grinned! How Hawkins laughed! Messrs. Prince and Co. on the high-road to success, then? Alas for “the pictur’ of Sal!”

CHAPTER XV.

THE COUNTERPLOT.

“Let it work,
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar; and it shall go hard,
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon: O, 'tis most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.”

SHAKSPEARE: *Hamlet*.

CAPTAIN MALEENOVSKY did not remain much longer in the cabin. Longing to give the drunken old sailor a kick in a tender part of his body, he went on deck, and found Helen seated by the side of the ship. The sea was becoming very rough: but it was a brilliant night; scarcely dark enough to be called twilight. Whether that subdued light were in keeping with Helen's style of beauty, she certainly looked lovelier than ever. Face, radiant; literally shining in that semi-darkness. With thankfulness? With love?

The second mate was walking up and down in front of them; and Captain Maleenovsky did not deem it wise to enter into any serious talk. Helen had turned for a moment to look at the sea, and, turning back rather suddenly,

caught him gazing at her with a rapt look. What was the meaning of that look? Passionate love, after all? Oh, the wretchedness of that uncertainty! Why not be more open with her?

Soon after, the gentlemen came on deck. Prince Boriatinsky had laid in an extra stock of courage from his dressing-table as well as from his wine-bottle; and he looked, as he thought, irresistible. And, certainly, if a tailor could make a man, he was a magnificent specimen of humanity. He stopped in front of Helen, and said in English:

"Not retired to your repose yet, my dear Miss Cameron?"

"No, your Highness," answered Helen in French.

"I would advise you to retire." (In English.)

"Allow me to regulate my own affairs." (In French.)

"It is going to be a tempestuous night." (In English.)

"Better a storm than a meddler." (In French.)

General laughter. Highness so nettled as to be forced into speaking French at last.

"I see how it is, mademoiselle," he exclaimed angrily: "you prefer the advice of a coward."

And he pointed scornfully to Captain Ma-
leenovsky with a gold-headed cane which he
carried in his hand. He was proud of that
cane: not a common cane, but a work of
art, studded with diamonds and other jewels.
Having designed it himself, he prided himself
on the beauty of the design. I forget how
much it had cost: some fabulous sum. The
way in which he flourished that cane was a
work of art in itself. It seemed to say to the
world at large: "You ordinary mortals! You
can sport only a common walking-stick; but
I, a Prince of the Empire, and one of the
richest nobles in Europe, can flourish a precious
work of art." It was with some such hidden
meaning that he had been flourishing it now;
and, when he pointed with it to Captain Ma-
leenovsky, the action expressed even more
than his words. It meant: "He is not only
a coward, but a poor beggarly plebeian to
boot; and I am not only a hero, but a rich
and mighty Prince of the Empire."

The gentlemen had crowded round him, to
see the fun; and there was every hope of a

"scene." Captain Maleenovsky, according to his wont, took no notice of swaggering highness. But Helen's patience was exhausted; and there was a grand outburst of wrath and scorn. With glowing cheeks, flashing eyes, and dilated nostrils, she cried:

"You know, and all these gentlemen know, that it is *you* that are the coward: and not a commonly despicable one either; but a mean, pitiful, sneaking, dastardly coward! Because a gentleman nobly restrains himself, the better to shield a lady from your brutal violence, you must needs take advantage of his very nobleness to insult him; like an impudent puppy barking at a lion in his cage! You know, and these gentlemen know, that, if his hands were not tied by his resolve to protect me from your insults, you would no more dare to insult him than the puppy would dare to attack the lion."

"At any rate, I don't shelter myself behind a lady's petticoats as he does," said the prince, foaming with rage.

"You are a liar as well as a coward!" answered Helen. "You know that he does *not* shelter himself behind a lady's petticoats: you know, and all these gentlemen know, that it is he that protects me."

"It does not look like it just now."

"I thought yesterday that I had never seen a nobler specimen of courage than Captain Maleenovsky showed in treating you with silent contempt: but I begin to think now that there was truth in what he told me, that it did not need much courage to defy *you*; that he could well afford to despise the impotent blusterings of a poor, sneaking, dastardly coward."

"Hush!" whispered Captain Maleenovsky: "that's enough, mademoiselle."

But Helen was so much excited, that she did not heed the warning.

"If you want to find fitting antagonists, go on fighting with *women*," she said with cutting sarcasm; "because, if you pit yourself against *men*, you will come to grief."

"I will show you that I can fight with men," cried the prince.

And he struck Captain Maleenovsky with his cane. Yes, it had come to that: he had played out his trump card! He had come to his grand resource—the cane! Well, he did not get much by it. Captain Maleenovsky quietly wrenched the cane out of his hands, and coolly threw it overboard! The gold-

headed, jewel-studded cane; the precious work of art, on which poor highness prided himself so much! It was gone; gone for ever! Gallant Captain took no further notice of highness : sitting by Helen's side as coolly as if nothing had happened. But highness was fearfully excited.

"Give me back my cane, you thief!" he roared.

Captain Maleenovsky smiled grimly at the thought of giving back the cane, which must by that time have sunk to the bottom of the Baltic, weighted by its gold and precious stones. But he was silent. Highness doubled his fists, and rushed up to him. But he was roughly pulled back from behind, and jostled aside.

"Stand aside, you dirty for'n prince," cried Joey Willing : "no more of that 'ere nonsense here !"

He startled them almost as much as if he had been a ghost : the old sailor, whom they had left, as they thought, dead drunk under the table in the cabin ! And there he was, in full possession of all his senses, and seemingly as sober as a judge. Least of all, perhaps, did Captain Maleenovsky expect to see him ; and,

yet, in this time of his need, when he could scarcely have helped fighting in self-defence, and so losing all the advantage he had gained by two days of patient endurance, there was the old sailor at his post, ready with his succour.

"How dare you?" cried highness, turning to Joey.

"Dare!" repeated Joey scornfully. "D'ye fancy ye have to do this time with a man whose hands is tied ahind his back?"

"Let me alone!"

"Ay, ay, sir, I'll let ye alone fast enough, if ye'll let others alone," said Joey with a grim smile: "I be so mortal took with ye, as I'll stick to ye, will ye nill ye."

"Interfere with me again at your peril!"

And again highness rushed up to Captain Maleenovsky; but Joey pushed him aside again, and this time twirled him on the floor of the deck with some force.

"If there's any more of that 'ere nonsense, I'll pitch into ye, as sure's my name's Joseph Willin'," he said; and he doubled up his fists. "Look ye here," he continued, holding out those same fists: "see them two? Them 'ere's felled a champing o' Hingland in their day—*they* has!"

Highness picked himself up from the deck, foaming with rage, and cried :

"I will have you flogged within an inch of your life !"

"D'ye think ye be still in Roosha ? This yere's a British ship, I'm a-thinkin'."

"I'll report you to the captain !" roared the prince, turning to go away.

"Ay, do," answered Joey, laughing with unmistakable scorn. "It must be in the mornin', though, I'm a-thinkin'. 'Cause why ? Ye'll find captain dead drunk in the cabin."

And he winked at Captain Maleenovsky. A wink which said : "He has fallen into his own trap ; the wine, which he drugged for you, has taken effect on himself." Had Joey seen Maleenovsky change glasses then ? Had others seen him ?

Soon after the disappearance of highness, most of the other gentlemen went down ; and as Joey had walked off, Captain Maleenovsky was again left alone with Helen. He looked grave, and said :

"I wish you hadn't interfered, mademoiselle."

"He deserves it."

"Oh, as to that, I agree with you. But

you see, mademoiselle, you have precipitated matters ; and how I am to keep the peace henceforth, I do not know. We have lost all the benefit of the last few days."

"I am sorry I have disarranged your plans," answered Helen. "But really my patience was exhausted: I could no longer see you insulted with impunity."

"I thank you for standing up for me," said Maleenovsky coldly ; "but you have unconsciously done an infinite amount of mischief. You have overturned all my plans ; and what I am to do next, is the puzzle. This crisis is what I have been trying to avoid all along."

Such a rebuke from any other man would have drawn a sharp retort from Helen. But she only bowed her head meekly to the stroke, and earnestly asked Captain Maleenovsky's forgiveness. Indeed, she began to see that she had placed him in a rather ridiculous position. He had borne insults patiently on the plea of defending a lady ; and it seemed, that, all the time, the lady was not only able to hold her own, but had so much superfluous strength, that she stood up as *his* champion. While she was "standing up for him," it did look as if there were some truth in Prince Boriatinsky's

taunt that he was "sheltering himself behind a lady's petticoats." Helen saw this, and was vexed with herself.

Joey Willing had returned, and was lingering near them in a way very unusual in him. Captain Maleenovsky, thinking that he had something to say, went up and joined him.

"Well, Capt'n?" was first mate's greeting.

"You have given an agreeable surprise to me," said the captain: "I thought you in the cabin drunk; and, when you have appeared on the deck, it was as one large dead body."

"Ho, ho, ho!" shouted Joey. "So you thought, Capt'n, as how I had forgot the pictur' of my Sal."

And Joey rolled along on deck, as if he were a land-lubber who had not found his sea-legs.

"I did verily."

"And so my shammin' took in even you as know'd as how I were a-goin' to sham. Well, that be good!"

"I will never again be an infidel concerning your power of shaming half the sea, or even the whole sea. But I think you shame Prince Boriatinsky most goodly. You are a splendid actor!"

"Ye sees, it come nat'ral like to me."

"But what has become of all the bottles of wine?"

"What bottles of wine?"

"The bottles which you have to-night poured into your wine-glass. You could not drink all that wine, and yet remain not drunk."

"I didn't touch ne'er a blessed drop, as I be a sinner! Thinks I to mysel': 'The pictur' o' my Sal mustn't suffer any hill-convenience through my folly; and, if I touch one drop,' thinks I, 'I'll touch a thousand.'"

"It was very noble; and I thank you."

"No thanks, Capt'n: ye sees, I could do no less for the pictur' of my Sal."

"I thank you nevertheless."

Captain Maleenovsky had occasion to go down to his cabin; and, when he walked away, Joey stepped up to Helen, and opened one of his broadsides.

"That for'n capt'n your sweetheart?" he asked.

"No."

"Avast!"

This time it was the genuine "Avast" of surprise. Joey could not grasp the idea all at once: he had to ponder it a long time in

his peripatetic style, before he could take it into his mind. After a few rounds, he came back to Helen, and said :

“ Not your sweetheart ? ”

“ No, I tell you ! ”

“ Avast ! ”

Still Joey could not take it in. Not her sweetheart, and yet so intimate with her ? Something rotten in the state of Denmark ! He hammered the idea in his brain for a long time, walking fiercely all the while ; but nothing would come out of it. So he came up to Helen the third time, and almost hissed :

“ Sure he’s not your sweetheart ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“ Avast ! ”

This time the idea had been sufficiently hammered into his brain—as a matter of fact ! But what to do with it there ? It would not do to stow it away in some dark corner among other chaotic rubbish. Drunken old sailor, in some sense responsible for the morals of Sal’s pictur’ ! Dull and slow as he was, he saw it was a problem he must work out if he could, and get something practical to come out of it. So he went up to Helen, but stood so long without speaking, that Helen had to say :

"Well, Mr. Willing?"

"Wouldn't be so thick wi' 'un, if I was you, miss."

"Why, I have told you he is an old friend : used to visit me in my father's house."

Joey went off on his peripatetic tour, to ponder the new problem which had been placed before his labouring intellect. Perhaps, on the whole, it was an easier nut to crack than the one which went before. At any rate, he was not so long in cracking it. The outcome of his thoughts embodied itself in the following language when he returned to Helen :

"I don't purtend to be as wise as your fayther ; but 'ouldn't allow my Sal to be so intimate with any young man as warn't her sweetheart ; beggin' your pardon, miss."

"You see, Mr. Willing, Captain Maleenov-sky is the only gentleman here that I know, and therefore the only one that I can thoroughly trust."

In the peripatetic philosophy of Joey Willing there was a clear provision for the want which Helen felt ; and therefore it was not long before he returned, and delivered another broadside, which he himself thought overwhelming.

"If I may be so bold as to 'xpress my 'pinion, miss, I should say as how an old man like mysen 'ould be——"

"Very likely, Mr. Willing: but then, you see, I don't know you; whereas I have known Captain Maleenovsky for years."

This was a poser for Joey: if it didn't sink him downright, it at any rate silenced his batteries. Uttering the last "Avast" which Helen was destined to hear that night, he walked off to the wheel.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE AND DUTY.

"For Love himself took part against himself
To warn us off."

TENNYSON: *Love and Duty.*

Who could have forecast the actual *denouement* of the strange situation? *L'homme propose, Dieu dispose.* Messrs. Prince and Hawkins had laid a plot: Messrs. Maleenovsky and Willing were trying a counterplot. But a Higher Power took the matter out of their hands, and showed that both were underplots which He had inwoven into His own main plan.

Prince Boriatinsky's foreboding that it would prove a stormy night had been fully realised. The wind grew fiercer every hour, and lashed the waves into fury. All the following day the storm kept on increasing; and when night came round again it blew a hurricane. Helen had gone down to her berth: no danger from man at present; highness too busy looking after his stomach to think of plot or counterplot. But Captain Maleenovsky remained on deck.

Night dark as pitch: sky blotted out by dense masses of black cloud. None knew where they were: they had been drifting for hours in a way which put out all their chances of reckoning. It was a fearful sight to see the *Boreas* struggling with the storm: she looked like a mere plaything in the hands of the sea; tossed up and down from valley to mountain, and from mountain back again to valley. Suddenly a bright flash of lightning lighted up the sea. The crested waves looked like a chain of mountains all around. As the lightning tipped the crests, the scene was grand. The next moment the darkness was "darkness that might be felt."

The lightning had revealed Joey Willing standing close to Captain Maleenovsky. The old sailor was remarkably subdued and solemn. His peripatetic tendency seemed to have forsaken him; indeed, had it been ever so strong within him, he could not very well have indulged it while the *Boreas* herself was in such a highly skittish mood. The motion of the ship acted homœopathically on him, and for the time cured him of his own. Maleenovsky asked him if he thought there was any danger.

"Ay, ay, Capt'n," answered Joey. "Shiver

my timbers if I'd bet a five pun' note on our chance of 'scapin'."

"You think some chance?"

"Well, when it come to such a squall as this yere, it's a heven chance—sink or swim. Seem to me as how God A'mighty were a-playin' a game o' chance wi' us."

Suddenly there came a strange lull in the storm.

"Storm stopping?" asked Maleenovsky.

"Ay, ay, Capt'n, just as tiger stop when he's a-goin' to take a spring! Hug us all the closer arter this."

Another flash of lightning. The *Boreas* was on the top of a mountain wave; and within a few hundred yards of them they saw another ship, disabled and in dire distress. The stranger craft had seen the *Boreas* too: for there came from her a dreadful cry; a cry for succour, the cry of human souls in mortal agony and dread. Through the lull it came, clear and shrill; and it thrilled all who heard it.

In answer to Maleenovsky's eager questioning, Joey said that nothing could be done to save the stranger craft. The cry was repeated; but it grew fainter each time. Maleenovsky

became very grave. Frightful thought, that a number of men were perishing so near, and that nothing could be done to save them. Alas! was not their fate but an earnest of that of the *Boreas*? Only a step between them and death! Scarcely a man who saw that piteous sight but felt somewhat awed. Impossible to see God working in his majesty without paying homage to His power! Another flash: not a trace of the stranger craft! Had she sunk? None could say: they could only guess the worst.

But they were soon aroused out of the thought of stranger-woe by the thought of their own danger. As Joey had foretold, the lull proved but the forerunner of a still more awful storm. And then there arose that dreadful cry which strikes a chill whenever heard:

“Breakers ahead!”

Maleenovsky could see the white foam right ahead; and, in another moment, there was a shock which made the whole ship quiver and creak. The *Boreas* had struck upon a rock. A moment before, it had been on the top of a wave, and, coming down with great force, had literally stuck upon the rock, transfixed and

held fast. Prow stuck; stern sinking. Within a short time, it must become a wreck: the only comfort, that the morning was beginning to dawn.

Maleenovsky went below, and knocked at the door of the ladies' cabin. It was opened by Helen herself: fully dressed, and quite calm.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"The ship is sinking fast; come away, mademoiselle."

"Save her!" said Helen, pointing to Miss Meldrum.

Now to save Miss Meldrum was not what Maleenovsky had bargained for. Still he could not leave her to be drowned there, like a rat in a hole. What to do? Out of this dilemma he was delivered by Joey, who appeared at the cabin door, bent on the same charitable errand as himself. "The pictur o' Sal" seemed to him too precious to be left packed up in the cabin. Maleenovsky proposed that Joey should rescue Miss Meldrum, while he took care of Helen. First mate rather grumbled at this agreeable distribution of parts. To his dim sense of poetical justice, it seemed clear that "the pictur o' Sal" should fall to the lot of "Sal's fayther." But there was no time to

lose in debate; so, as a practical as well as peripatetic philosopher, he consented.

When they reached the deck, they saw a great change. It was nearly daylight. The after part of the deck was under water. The bows of the ship were still fastened on to the rock above; and the stern naturally sank lower and lower into the sea. The terror and confusion on deck were indescribable. Helen's eye alighted on a strange, trembling, terror-stricken figure. It proved to be Prince Boriatsky, but so changed that it was hard to recognise him. The crash had come on so suddenly that he had no time to arrange his toilet. Brilliant teeth still in the glass of medicated water in which he placed them every night: cheeks therefore sunken, withered, and old; lengthy chin, claiming an absurd familiarity with lengthier nose. Glossy locks still on the peg on which he had hung them overnight; a quondam white night-cap, which had not lately paid a visit to washerwoman, covering his bald pate. A dirty old dressing-gown replaced his dazzling gold-faced uniform. Yellow and old, shivering with terror and cold, a pitiable figure indeed! Would Helen ever fear him again?

He had just offered Captain Hawkins ten thousand pounds if he saved him ; and the captain was calling on all present to bear witness to the bargain, when——another crash came. The poor *Boreas* snapped in the middle ; and most of the passengers were plunged into the sea.

They were off the Swedish coast. Happily the people who lived on the coast had sighted the wreck, and manned a lifeboat for a rescue. All were saved, excepting Captain Hawkins and Miss Meldrum. Poor Miss Meldrum ! Her enfeebled frame could not stand the shock. Helen Cameron always maintained that, but for Maleenovsky's heroic efforts, she too must have perished.

Perhaps Prince Boriatinsky suffered the most from his cold sea-bath ; and certain twinges which he never got rid of he always ascribed to the ducking he had had. But his bath had not made him "oblivious" (as he would say) of his hairlessness and toothlessness. His first act, on landing, was to ascertain if there were a good hairdresser in the neighbourhood. Hearing of nothing that came up to his ideal of the true and the beautiful in that important branch of art, he set off for Copenhagen.

There he replenished his wardrobe after the newest fashion. His locks became glossier and curlier than ever. His cheeks were filled out in a way which stretched all the wrinkles, and smoothed all the creases. His princely chin once more kept at a respectful distance from his princely nose. As for his clothes, you would have said *a priori* that a dashing young fellow was wrapped up in them. Having thus laid in a stock of courage at his tailor's, his dentist's, and his hairdresser's, he thought he might venture to present himself before Helen Cameron, and hastened to Elsinore, where he knew she was to embark for England. There, on making inquiries, he found that the *Fairy Queen* was about to sail for Hull. Without delay he boarded her; and, sure enough, there was Helen on deck.

What Helen's feelings were, on beholding her old admirer, I need not say. She was too sad, thinking of dear old Miss Meldrum, to brook much annoyance. It seemed as if Destiny were pelting her with this absurd prince. Wherever she went, he was flung into her face. The *Fairy Queen* was on the very point of sailing; and she was beginning to hope that she was rid of him for ever, when,

in the very nick of time, his glossy curls appeared on deck. He looked younger and grander than ever; and there was an assurance in his manner, as he approached her, which showed that he looked on the glimpse, which Helen had had of his hairless and toothless state of existence, as a myth, or a dream of the past. But both parties must give their consent to such a bargain; and Helen was not going to let him off quite so easily. At a glance she saw how much power that mischance of his had given her; and she meant to use it in self-defence.

"I am delighted to see you again, mademoiselle, and looking so well too," he said, bowing and smiling; "why, you look five years younger than when I saw you last."

"I am not surprised at that, your Highness," answered Helen archly; even grief for Miss Meldrum having to yield to the need of self-defence. "I think there must be something in the air of Denmark which makes one look young: do you know, your Highness looks *thirty* years younger than when I saw you last."

"Indeed!"

If Prince Boriatinsky could have blushed

he would have blushed then ; but, when one is made "beautiful for ever," it rather interferes with "the operations of nature." At any rate, he was dreadfully disconcerted. He was so upset, that he did not know what to say. Helen went on mercilessly to follow up her home-thrust, hoping to silence him for ever ! Small blame to her !

"I congratulate your Highness on the recovery of the—articles of your toilet," she continued.

"Oh, mademoiselle, spare me !"

"Certainly, your Highness ; and gladly too," answered Helen promptly. "But on one condition : that you spare *me*. That is fair, I think."

Highness beaten : forced to surrender on these terms. For a day or two, he kept the terms fairly enough ; but then there came a fresh sprout of admiration and effrontery. They were sitting side by side on deck one evening. No one else, beside the steersman, was within sight. Captain Maleenovsky, seeing how safe she was, and well able to hold her own, had latterly left her very much to herself ; though doubtless within call, in case of need. The prince had taken advantage of

this opportunity to speak more warmly and tenderly than he had done of late. He was capping the whole by saying :

"Yes, you will find me a man of sensibility——"

But Helen stopped him.

"A man !" she cried : "what makes a man ? I have heard of a tailor-made man before now ; but I have lived to see a dentist-made man, and a hairdresser-made man."

"Spare me !"

"Certainly, your Highness. But remember the terms : you must spare *me*."

"Have mercy ! When I behold your dazzling beauty, I must, as a man of sensibility——"

"I see !" said Helen archly : "the joint work of the tailor, the dentist, and the hairdresser makes what you call 'a man of sensibility.' Now I, for my part, would rather have the sole workmanship of the Almighty, unassisted by the other artists ; and however old and ugly he may be, if he is only true to himself, and is not ashamed of his real self, I can honour him."

"I see, mademoiselle, I have to curse my destiny for introducing me into your presence *en deshabille*."

"I, on the contrary, have to bless my destiny for allowing me to see you in that interesting state."

"Ah, mademoiselle, will you never bury that unfortunate *rencontre* in oblivion?"

"Never," answered Helen demurely. "Under those flowing locks I shall always see the bald shining pate; and under those smooth cheeks——"

"Have mercy!"

"Yes, so long as you keep your proper distance."

Highness utterly routed: forced, not merely to surrender on terms, but to stick to the terms of the surrender. Claws henceforth clipped: openly never more dangerous to Helen Cameron on board the *Fairy Queen*.

Ay, but how secretly? Whether he ever tried to tamper with the captain of that ship, as he had tampered with Captain Hawkins, I know not. If he did, he must have been baffled. Perhaps he had too much sense to make the attempt. On captain's face was written: "No thoroughfare this way."

In the meanwhile, the relation between Helen Cameron and Captain Maleenovsky had become one of the strangest kind. As soon as

the latter found that the former was in no more danger, he had ceased to wait upon her as he once did. True, he did not make himself so scarce as he had done before. But, to all outward seeming, Prince Boriatinsky himself was more intimate with her than Captain Maleenovsky. He was still kind and thoughtful and fatherly; but he evidently avoided her as much as he could.

It was all a mystery to poor Helen; and a dreadful mystery too. The hours and hours she spent in trying to scan his motives: to understand his demeanour as one whole; to give a reasonable explanation of all the past! Did he love her? She could only answer No! Had he loved her once! She could not doubt it. What had killed his love? She was at once brought back to the mysterious something. How could a crime quench his love! Ha! Had *she* done anything to estrange him? She had been true to him in thought and word and deed; nay, her love was of that whole-hearted kind which swallowed up everything else. How, then, could she have estranged him?

- While such thoughts passed through her mind, Captain Maleenovsky would walk about,

stern, moody, self-absorbed. He seldom spoke to her now; and when he did, it was with that studied coldness and politeness which said, "Thus far and no farther!" He would often stand for hours together on deck, looking at the sea. What thoughts passed through his mind then? Ah, if she could but have known! She could sometimes watch his face as she sat; but what would she not have given for a glimpse into his mind? At times a look of deep sadness would settle on his grand massive face. Once or twice she caught an expression of unspeakable tenderness on his manly features: was he thinking of her?

The wind was favourable; and the *Fairy Queen* made one of the shortest passages ever known from Elsinore to Hull. One evening, a little before sunset, the shores of England became visible. As they sailed up the Humber, their progress was slow. Long into the night, Helen sat watching either bank, long after all the gentlemen but one had retired to rest. Captain Maleenovsky walked up and down the deck in deep meditation; every now and then stopping to look at Helen Cameron. At length he said:

"This is our last night on board, mademoiselle; the captain tells me, that, when we awake in the morning, we shall find ourselves at Hull."

"I am almost sorry the voyage is coming to an end," answered Helen.

"May I presume to ask you where you have to go at Hull? Do not imagine that I ask out of idle curiosity or ulterior design. I set off for London to-morrow; but, after what has passed, I think it will be best for me to see you safely housed among your friends before I start."

"I shall be much obliged to you; I am going to a cousin of my father's, a Mr. Robert Cameron, a merchant who lives at Penton Lodge, London Road."

"That is well."

And he was about to walk off again. But Helen could not allow that. Her heart was full, nigh to bursting; and out of the abundance of her heart her mouth spoke.

"Oh, Captain Maleenovsky, I cannot tell you how much I feel indebted to you for all you have done for me."

"Pray don't mention it, mademoiselle," answered Maleenovsky.

He spoke coldly, and evidently meant to throw cold water on her genuine earnestness.

"The second time you have saved my life."

"I can assure you, mademoiselle, that you greatly exaggerate the little I did: it was your own heroic courage that really saved you; and all I did was simply to help you to keep that courage up till the boat arrived."

"And, though you did your best to hide the greatness of the danger from me, in order to save me from uneasiness, I cannot hide from myself that you have saved me from something worse than death," continued Helen.

Captain Maleenovsky looked at her: comparatively dark as it was, he could see that her eyes were filled with tears. He began one of his usual chilling replies: but her earnestness was catching; and before he had ended, his tone became warmer and his heart showed signs of being thawed.

"It was nothing but an act of common humanity," he had begun by saying. "Nothing which I can do can ever atone sufficiently for the dreadful mistake which I once made. Oh, mademoiselle! Forget it; and forgive me. Let the past *be* the past! Let no shadow rise out of it to overcast the bright

future which awaits you! I can't have watched you as I have done for the last few weeks without seeing that that act of madness on my part has done you harm. Let me have the happiness of believing that the harm is slight, and easily removed. You are young, rich, and beautiful; the proudest of happy England's sons might be proud to woo you. May the worthiest of them win you; and in your happiness may you forget that a poor beggar like me ever crossed your path! Our roads lie apart. God bless you and yours, mademoiselle! Farewell for the present: to-morrow we part to meet no more."

He was walking off, when Helen recalled him. She was sobbing: his words had moved her to the depths of her being. The whole past, with its sorrow and its joy, lay unrolled before her.

"Stay, Captain Maleenovsky!" she cried: "you owe me an explanation."

"An explanation?"

"Yes," said Helen earnestly; "if we must part to meet no more, it is due to me that you should explain the nature of the crime which separates us."

"Ah!"

Half a sigh, and half an exclamation.

"You led me once to think that you loved me. I can now see clearly that you love me no more."

"Thank God that you see it so clearly!" exclaimed Maleenovsky, with startling energy.

"But I say it is due to me that you should explain the crime of which you spoke."

"How can I explain it? It is a secret: a secret branded on my soul by dreadful oaths."

"But it is cruel to leave me in such frightful uncertainty."

"What can I say more, mademoiselle?" continued Captain Maleenovsky: "I can only repeat, what I said before, that it is grave enough to send me to Siberia or the scaffold."

"Alas!"

What remained for her to do? After what he had said, what more *could* be done? The mystery was as dark as ever; perhaps darker and drearier than ever it was before. Still nothing was left to her but to "love and be silent," or try to crush her love as he had done. Love and Duty? In her case, it was Love and Necessity.

Perhaps Captain Maleenovsky saw some-

thing of this in her face, saw and tried to answer it. He who had been silent so long, seemed unwontedly moved to speak.

"Mademoiselle," he said earnestly, "what more can I do to atone for my fatal error? I call God to witness that I would willingly die to give your mind peace. Life is not so sweet to me that I need cling to it; and my short career has already been darkened by so many losses and reverses, that I begin to feel weary. Indeed, the best solution of the difficulty would be to rid the world of the presence which has already blighted your career."

"No, no! God forbid!"

She spoke so earnestly, that Maleenovsky thought she had misunderstood his meaning.

"Do not mistake me, mademoiselle," he answered: "these hands will never fling back to the Creator the life which He has given. But there are other ways."

Helen was alarmed: what did he mean? Then a frightful thought entered her head.

"You will not fight Prince Boriatinsky?" she cried.

"I must."

"Oh, Captain Maleenovsky, if you ever loved

me ; if my earnest wish has any power over you ;—promise me never to fight that man.”

“I cannot : I have virtually accepted his challenge ; and, after all that has happened, the law of honour demands that I should meet him. There is no release from that bond.”

In her excitement Helen rose and spoke with gasping breath and flashing eyes.

“The law of honour ! It is a mere empty word ! There is a higher law than your boasted law of honour : the law of God which says, ‘Thou shalt not kill !’ ”

“Perhaps,” said Captain Maleenovsky : “nevertheless society forces us soldiers to abide by the law of honour.”

“No one can *force* you to do wrong.”

“Remember the penalty of disobedience.”

“Oh, Captain Maleenovsky, is it you who speak in this way ? You, who so nobly disregarded this hollow law of honour, and earned the reverence of all by doing so ! ”

“But it was on the clear understanding that the day of reckoning was merely postponed ; and I had then a higher motive for submitting to the imputation of cowardice.”

“Oh, Captain Maleenovsky ! ” cried Helen : “a higher motive than the desire to do right ? ”

“It is useless to argue the question. My own mind is fully made up. Farewell, mademoiselle: God bless you!”

He shook hands with her, and left her; left her weeping. O the future! How dark it looked!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ORIGINAL OF SAL'S PICTURE'.

• • • • •

“Hamlet. Repent what's past : avoid what is to come ;
And do not spread the compost o'er the weeds,
To make them rank.

Queen. O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O throw away the worsser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.”

SHAKESPEARE : *Hamlet*.

CAPTAIN HAWKINS, as we have seen, was one of those who perished in the wreck. Poor fellow ! He never lived to claim the ten thousand pounds which Prince Boriatinsky had promised. One of the very last acts of his life had embodied the master passion of his soul ; and, full of his greed, he had gone to a world whither he could not carry his ill-gotten gains.

Joey Willing, the first mate of the *Boreas*, had survived the wreck, and taken his passage to England in the *Fairy Queen*. He was greatly changed. Serious thoughts had come over him while battling with death ; and still they kept their hold on him. No more of the jovial temper which had cheered Helen. Having no

duties to do on board, he seemed out of his element. "Othello's occupation was gone." He was neither a gentleman to consort with the cabin passengers, nor a common sailor to hob-nob with the people: neither flesh nor fowl, but most like a fish out of water. Thus he had plenty of time for thought; and what thoughts he had seemed to make him sad. He was "moloncholly," as he told Helen more than once. Strange to say, he seemed even to have outgrown his peripatetic habits: he would sit for hours brooding over his thoughts. One thing Helen was delighted to mark: she had not once seen him drunk on board the *Fairy Queen*.

When she left Captain Maleenovsky, that last night they were on board, she came across Joey, who was sitting near the gangway. Her own sorrow had softened her heart; and she wanted to speak to the old sailor once more. He might leave the *Fairy Queen* before she rose in the morning; and this might be her last chance of a parting word. Sore as she was at heart, she controlled her feelings and addressed him. But Joey was so wrapped up in his own thoughts, that he did not hear her at first. Helen spoke again: Joey looked up, and, dusky as it was, could clearly see the lovely face beam-

ing upon him through its tears. He grinned strangely, and said:

"Ah, miss, I be a-chewin' the cud."

Helen could not make out what he meant. Joey had a quid of tobacco in his mouth, which he was busily operating upon. Was that his poetical way of describing his interesting performance?

"Chewing tobacco?" she asked.

"I be a chewin' the cud of my thoughts."

"What are you thinking of?"

"Says you: 'And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin'? And why not for Sal's sakes, Mr. Willin'?' says you. That is what I be a-thinkin' on, miss."

"I am very glad."

"When I were soused in that 'ere mighty hoshun, with that 'ere good leddy as is gone to kingdom come, them words came upon me, and shook me like. I hears them as how they was a-soundin' through capt'n's trumpet. 'And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin'?' thinks I. And when I sees her as is gone to kingdom come a-floatin' dead afore me, thinks I to mysen': 'your turn'll come next.' And then thinks I again: 'and why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin'?'"

Helen was moved. Strange that a chance word of hers, which she had long forgotten, should have sunk so deep: Helen was not what you would call a pious girl: but God had been at work on her for months; and, through the long anguish, deeper thoughts and higher aims had been slowly replacing her former light and frivolous character. Thank God! The grub stage at least was over: the chrysalis was unfolding its wings, and preparing to fly. Of course, her surroundings might help to keep down those wings of the soul. She herself might wound and mangle them as they tried to stretch themselves. But, come what might, she would never henceforth remain content with a low earth-born life. Her destiny was to fly into the sunshine.

And now this unlooked-for revelation of the wholesome working of chance words, which she herself had uttered in the past, impressed her for the first time with the responsibility of speech. She saw that, without any very earnest intention, she had clearly done Joey some good: and she longed to say something that would deepen the impression on his mind; but, not having Rachel Randal's gifts in that line, she did not know how to begin. She merely

grasped Joey's hand, her small and delicate fingers looking out of place on his huge palm, and said with earnest voice :

"May God help you, Mr. Willing !"

"Ay, miss," answered Joey slowly and seriously : "I be a-formin' a purpis."

"What purpose ?"

But Joey had collapsed. He sat silent and glum. Had his eloquence exhausted itself in the extraordinary effort he had just made? Helen thought so : she had never heard him deliver so long a speech before—at one gulp ! However, she was mistaken : he had merely been loading his guns ; and there was plenty of ammunition behind.

"I were not al'ays the drunken fool ye seen me, miss," he said after a pause. "There were a time when I gone to church wi' the best on 'em. And seem to me as how God A'mighty was a-pitchin' into me !"

"Well, I hope, Mr. Willing, that you will carry out your purpose."

"As to the purpis, miss, that be neither yere nor there. I'd be a wuss fool than I be to cackle over the hegg afore I've laid 'un. And, if I does lay 'un, happen God A'mighty 'll help me to hatch 'un, as ye say, miss."

"Good night, Mr. Willing," answered Helen at length: "I mustn't stay up any longer. Good-bye, I suppose it must be: perhaps I shall never see you again."

"I'll tell ye what it be, miss: I hopes the next time I sees ye, the hegg will be hatched."

"I wish I could thank you as you deserve for all your kindness to me, Mr. Willing."

This was too hard a problem for Joey to solve. All he could say was:

"Just think on that 'ere!"

"Give my kind regards to your Sal; and tell her how much I owe to her for all your kindness. What a happy thing it has been for me that I am so much like her! I should like to make her acquaintance, were it but to know what I am like."

Poor Joey could only lift up his hands in astonishment and cry:

"Well, to be sure!"

"By-the-bye, does she live in Hull?"

This problem not being too hard for Joey to solve, he answered promptly enough:

"Yes, miss."

"Then I may see you again sooner than I thought: I expect to remain in Hull for a few

"It is all I shall be very much to call at
your house and see you."

"You will be very welcome."

"I shall be very much to call at your house
and see you and your mother and father. And
I shall be very much to call at your house. I shall be
very much to call at your house and see you."

"I shall be very much to call at your house."

"Will you be very much to call at your house
and see you and your mother and father. And
I shall be very much to call at your house. I shall be
very much to call at your house and see you."

"Will you be very much to call at your house?"

"I shall be very much to call at your house."

"I shall be very much to call at your house."

"I shall be very much to call at your house. The old
lady was very much to call at your house and see you."

"Will you be very much to call at your house and see you
and your mother and father. I shall be very much to call at
your house and see you."

"Will you be very much to call at your house. Mr. Willing."

"I shall be very much to call at your house."

"The people he formed miss," he said.
"And why not for your own sake, Mr. Willing?
And why not for Sal's sake, Mr. Willing?"
Then words I have the hope, miss: if so be
as God Almighty goes on a-pitchin' into me
strong enough."

"May he bless you!" answered Helen.

And she went down to her berth; while Joey remained on deck, busily hatching his new-laid temperance egg.

When they arrived at Hull the following morning, Joey was one of the first to leave the *Fairy Queen*.

As he reached his house in Selby Street, dreadful cries of "murder!" greeted his ears from within. He hastily pushed the door open; and a strange sight revealed itself in the passage. A tall, big, bony, fresh-coloured girl of about twenty, in a dirty old tattered gown, was "pitching into" a lean, shrivelled, little woman of middle age; while a boy of ten was trying to bite the girl's legs, and another girl of twelve had taken hold of her long dishevelled hair, and was tugging away at it with might and main. A sorry greeting for the head of the house! As soon as he saw the sight, Joey cried:

"Let her be, Sal!"

Alas, Sal's "knocking-down gifts" had been called out even sooner than he had expected.

"Be that you, fayther?"

"Let her be, lass!"

As soon as Sal heard her father's voice, she had turned round; and now she bounded back. The sound of that voice seemed to have a magi-

cal effect upon her. Was that the original of Sal's pictur' ? That gawky, ungainly, unwieldy creature ! In the excitement of the fight she had scarcely noticed the boy and the younger girl ; but now, when she tried to reach her father, they hampered her, and held her back. A gentle kick disengaged her leg ; and one good shake settled the younger girl's hash. The next moment she had thrown her arms round her father's neck, and was passionately kissing his drink-empurpled cheeks. A terma-gant not without sensibility !

" Oh, fayther, fayther ! " she exclaimed : " I be so glad to see ye back ! But what's this ? " she continued, remarking his unusually grave and sombre look : " be ye ill ? "

" Ah, Sal ! " answered Joey gravely : " this be a sorry sight for a fayther to see ! "

" Why can't she keep a civil tongue in her head, then ? " cried Sal passionately. " Here hev' I been a-keepin' my temper beautiful, a-givin' in to her all these yere months, niver a-touchin' her no more nor half-a-dozen times since ye've been away ; and she must go and aggrawate one, the very last day of all others. If it ain't enough to send one into hastericks ! "

" What hev' yer mother done to ye ? "

"She ain't no mother o' mine!" cried Sal indignantly. "Don't ye go a-callin' her by that name no more, fayther! Mother's in heaven! Aunt Hannah told me so. And she ort to know. 'Cause why? She saw her go?"

"Well, what's your stepmother done to ye, Sal?" asked Joey.

"She's been a-callin' me names again, fayther, and a-tellin' me as how my own mother were a ——! I can't a-bear that: and she know it too; and that's why she go and do it. I can drudge for her, which she know full well, and which she make me do it hivery day of my life, and keep me in rags and feed me on scraps into the bargain. Look yere, fayther!" added Sal, holding up the skirt of her dirty and tattered dress: "this be a purty gownd for my fayther's darter to appear in—ain't it? And look there!" pointing to Mrs. Willing No. 2, "and them brats! Why, fayther, my go-to-meetin' gownd ain't fit to hold the candle to they!"

Well, it could not be denied that Mrs. Willing No. 2 and her children were remarkably well-dressed for their rank of life, whereas Sal might have been a beggar girl whom they had taken into the house out of pity.

"Avast!" cried Joey.

As usual, he left it to his hearers to interpret the exclamation whichever way they chose.

"I calls it a shame! One 'ould 'spose she'd brought a fortin' wi' her, 'stead o' coming to yer house a beggar, and being beholdin' to ye for hivery blessed rag on them brats' backs!"

Mrs. Willing No. 2, who had meanwhile picked herself up, tried to put in a word:

"Ye're a dirty ——"

"Dirty!" exclaimed Sal sarcastically: "I should think so. In coorse I be dirty. D'ye 'xpect me to be clean and taut in these yere precious rags?"

"Disobedient ——"

"That's a lie!" cried Sal with fierce energy. "I've niver disobeyed ye but oncet since fay-ther left home: and that was when ye tells me to go to the public and git ye a bottle of gin; and ye knows wery well that ye was screwed purty tight a'ready, and I tells ye that I'd see ye in —— first."

Poor Joey found it a hard task to restore peace to his family. But, after awhile, he succeeded. Mrs. Willing No. 2, a sour

woman, whose outward bearing was but a type of the barren and shrivelled state of her "innards" (as Sal called her heart), stood in wholesome dread of her pugilistic husband, and, after as stout a resistance as she dared to carry on, became amenable to reason. Sal, on the other hand, loved her father with a love so strong and deep that for his sake she gave in.

For his sake she did many things. For his sake she had submitted for years to a tyranny the more galling from the fact that her stepmother took advantage of her best feelings to goad her. For his sake she had been a drudge and a slave in her own father's house, doing all the dirty work, and leaving her stepmother and her children to enjoy themselves. For his sake she usually kept a padlock on that sharp tongue of hers. For his sake, above all, she generally curbed those brawny arms and formidable fists of hers. But every now and then, when goaded too far, and especially when taunted about her mother, she would break through all restraint, as she had done this morning.

As soon as order had been restored to the household, Joey sat down in his favourite

elbow-chair, in a corner of the kitchen fireplace, and lighted a pipe. Very soon he seemed to have forgotten all around, and to be lost in thought. This was so unlike his usual self, that Sal began to be anxious about her father. What had come to him? He, commonly so bright and cheery, save when he was drunk, to sit there so silent and glum! Of course Sal knew nothing of the "purpis." Was it her outbreak that had upset him? Feeling herself guilty, she tried to amuse her father. She had some mother-wit of her own; and she trotted it out, and made funny remarks on men and things. But he, who had hitherto always rewarded her efforts with loud guffaws, did not smile once, and only gave her short answers through the puffs of smoke. Poor Sal was at her wit's end: "there were some screw loose somewheers," she thought. She redoubled her efforts; and it was touching to see that big, bouncing, unwieldy girl, who had so lately knocked down her stepmother, straining every nerve to comfort and amuse that old drunkard. At length, she exclaimed triumphantly:

"I knows what it be!"

"What be it, lass?"

And Joey puffed out a mouthful of smoke.

"Don't ye wish ye may git it?" said Sal, winking and nodding mysteriously.

"Let it be, then, Sal."

But Sal would not let it be. She continued to wink and nod; making mysterious signs, and jerking her head toward the spot where Mrs. Willing No. 2 stood, in a way which only puzzled her father. What was the girl at? The girl turned round to look at her step-mother, and, seeing that she was not watched, slyly put her thumb and forefinger to her lips, and tipped back her head.

"If some folk 'ould let other folk be, t'other folk 'ould be a deal better than they be," she said mysteriously, making another sign: "I b'lieves ye!"

"What be the matter with the lass?" exclaimed Joey: "be ye growin' daft, Sal?"

"I b'lieves ye!"

"Speak out, lass!"

But Sal meant not to speak out so long as Mrs. W. was in the room. After a while, however, that amiable lady said that she must go out and "git sum'at for dinner."

"And sum'at for the linin' of her own stummick," whispered Sal in her father's ear.

"Hark ye, lass," answered Joey: "your fayther ain't the man to bring her to book."

The younger children announced that they meant to go out with their mamma; and, in a few minutes, Mr. Willing and his elder daughter were left alone. Then Sal's meaning came out. She sprang to a cupboard in a corner of the kitchen, and triumphantly brought forth a wine-glass and—a bottle of gin! Sal never liked her father to drink in her stepmother's presence; somehow she fancied that it brought him down to the level of Mrs. W. No. 2. But, behind Mrs. W.'s back, why, he might indulge himself. So, filling the wine-glass with gin, she handed it to her father.

"That be the matter, fayther," she exclaimed: "there now: ye'll be all right!"

Joey eyed the glass with that greedy look which I daresay you have seen in a drunkard who has had nothing to drink for some time. Alas for the "purpis!" He clutched the glass, and put it to his lips. His big nostrils sniffed the gin: ah, how delicious! Then suddenly he cried:

"And why not for yer own sakes, Mr.

Willin' ? And why not for Sal's sakes, Mr. Willin' ?'"

Sal stood watching him with blank astonishment. Was her father going mad ? Joey dashed the glass with great energy on the ground.

"Fayther, fayther, what be the matter wi' ye ?" cried Sal, throwing her big bony arms round Joey's neck : "*ye* ain't growin' daft—be ye ?"

"That ain't the way to hatch the hegg," answered Joey.

"No, fayther, that be the way to break it," said Sal, smiling. "Ye'll bring your heggs to a fine market, if ye goes on that gate ! But what heggs be ye a-talkin' on ?"

"The purpis, lass ; the purpis !"

"What purpis, fayther ?"

"Ah, Sal, God A'mighty been a-scratchin' and a-worritin' of me about this yere drink."

Now Sal, I fancy, had not much poetry in her soul. I daresay she knew as much of God Almighty as her drunken father : but her natural bent was to anthropomorphism ; and it had been fostered by the coarse way in which an ignorant preacher was in the habit

of grinding down the sublime poetry of the Bible to the dullest prose.

"I see no scratches, fayther," she answered, scanning his person carefully.

"Gud A'mighty been a-pullin' of me purty short, and a-rubbin' of me purty sharp."

"What d'ye mean, fayther?"

"Look ye yere, lass: sit ye down yonder, and listen to me. The purtiest young leddy I hiver set heyes on coom with us from Cronstadt. Well, there were a nasty, dirty for'n prince aboard, as wanted to make up to her; and I purtected the sweet young leddy, as in juty bound. But one day I were tighter nor common; and next day when I talks of purtecting her, she says, 'But what if so be ye be drunk, Mr. Willin'? Well, lass, I were purty considerable ashamed of mysen'. And I says to her: 'For your sakes, miss, I won't git drunk 'xcept when ye be safe in yer berth.' And she hanswers: 'And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin'?' says she. 'And why not for Sal's sake, Mr. Willin'?' says she. 'Cause, ye sees, I'd bin a-tellin' her on ye, Sal, and a-callin' of her the pictur' o' my Sal."

"Laws-a-day!" cried Sal; "to liken a

purty young leddy to the likes of me! What were the colour of her hair, fayther?"

"Well, Sal, soon arter that, ye sees, we was wrecked. And, as God A'mighty were a-duckin' of me in the mighty hoshun, and I 'spected hivery minit he were a-goin' to drownd me and no mistake, thinks I to mysen': 'And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin'?' And, then I thinks of ye, my lass, and happen I might niver see ye no more, thinks I to mysen': 'And why not for Sal's sakes, Mr. Willin'?' And says I to mysen': 'If God A'mighty gits me out of this yere 'tarnal fix this bout, may my Sal be spliced to a stinkin' for'ner if iver I gits drunk again.'"

"Oh, fayther, I be so glad!" cried Sal, clapping her hands for joy. "I should like to see Mrs. W. cast it in my teeth agin, about hevin' a drunken fayther—that I should. Shan't I hold up my head purty considerable now? Jist about it!"

"And yet, lass, ye was a-goin' to tempt me with this yere gin!"

"It were 'cause I thought ye out o' sorts, fayther: ye've been so grumpish all the mornin'."

THEY WERE THE PURPIS.

"... were the purpis.

"... won't I cackle

"... won't I cackle

"... won't I cackle

"... go far to tempt me

"... go far to tempt me

"... honour bright."

"... and why not for yer

"... And why not for

"... And why not for

"... round her father's

"... passionately; and we

"... the 'purpis' was fully

"... temperance egg likely

"... temperance egg likely

CHAPTER XVIII.

MRS. SOMEBODY.

“ ‘What do they call you?’ ‘Katie.’ ‘That were strange!’
‘What surname?’ ‘Willows.’ ‘No!’ ‘That is my name.’
‘Indeed!’ ”

TENNYSON: *The Brook.*

It was early in the morning when the *Fairy Queen* reached Hull; and most of the passengers remained on board till after breakfast. Captain Maleenovsky then accompanied Helen to the shore. The first thing which struck Helen, on landing in England, was that every one spoke English. It was so natural for them; and yet it sounded so queer to her. English had been to her the language of refinement and gentility; but in Hull the dirty, ragged beggar boys spoke that sacred tongue. It was some time before the sense of incongruity left her. The next thing which struck her was the mean look of Hull: accustomed as she was to the vast palaces of St. Petersburg, and knowing next to nothing of any other town, it chilled her to find the first place she saw in England looking so mean.

They hailed a hackney coach, and drove on to the London Road. They had no difficulty in finding Penton Lodge. A footman in livery answered their knock. He had a solemn look on his face, which struck Helen a good deal. Mr. Cameron was at home; and the footman asked Helen to step into the drawing-room. Captain Maleenovsky bade her farewell. As he pressed her hand warmly and lingeringly, as if he could not part from her, she looked up into his face; and what she saw there shook the belief, which had been growing upon her for some time, that he did not love her. If that was not love which shone out of his eyes, and quivered all over his face, what was it? Whatever it might have been, his iron will soon came to his help; and he firmly tore himself away, and with unfaltering voice bade her farewell for ever! Till that moment Helen had never known how much she loved him. When a week it seemed as if she were left alone in the world! Ah, if dear old Miss Watson could have been with her!

She went into the drawing-room, and sat down. As soon as the footman had disappeared, she drew her face close to the window. Such a crowd of painful thoughts pressed upon her mind, and she felt

so utterly wretched, that there could have been no other outlet for her grief. It was well that it was all over before Mr. Robert Cameron entered the room. Her eyes looked red; but there was no other sign of the outburst of feeling to which she had given way.

Mr. Cameron looked not unkindly; but he seemed stiff and somewhat embarrassed. Well he might be; for he had a painful duty to discharge. A dangerous fever was in the house: it was raging in Hull at the time. Mr. Cameron's wife and only son were laid up with it. Now, it would never do for Helen, in her delicate state of health, to remain in the house. But what to do with her? She was to have gone on to Edinburgh in a month or two, to pay a visit to her uncle William. But Mrs. William Cameron and her daughters had lately taken lodgings on the banks of Ulleswater in Cumberland. Best for Helen to go there at once, and postpone her visit to Hull till her return. It was true, her aunt and cousins were not expecting her; and it was not certain whether they could make room for her in their lodgings. But necessity had no law. Moreover, it would be best for Helen to start at once, to avoid the danger. A coach

went that very morning from Hull to Carlisle: would it not be wisest for her to avail herself of it as far as Ambleside?

Now, Helen knew it was real kindness that prompted this proposal: nevertheless, in spite of her better feelings, it struck her with a sudden chill. Was not England somewhat cold? Here she was in a strange country; and she felt bitterly that she was alone. Her only friend gone! What made it worse was that Mr. Cameron could not accompany her: his duty to his wife and son chained him to Hull. Now, ever since her unpleasant adventures with Prince Boriatinsky, she shrank from the thought of travelling alone. It was not likely that she should fall in with highness again; but other men, just as disagreeable, might spring up at any moment. True, Mr. Cameron proposed that Tom, the footman, should go with her to Ulleswater; but it was clear to Helen that he could not protect her as a gentleman might have done. The thought of going alone so far, to a strange place, to find herself among strangers at the end of her journey, was painful enough. But there was no help for it; and so Helen simply fell in with all Mr. Cameron's arrangements, and

drove away in his carriage to the inn whence the Carlisle coach started. A pleasant journey to you!

The horses were already in, and the driver was taking his seat on the box when Helen arrived at the inn. There were two passengers inside; and happily, as Helen thought, they were an old gentleman and his wife. No annoyance from gentlemen for the next stage at least, one would hope. Vain hope! The coach had actually begun to move, when the door opened; and who should come in but—Prince Boriatinsky! Destiny still pelting her with this absurd prince! Highness staying at the inn whence the coach started: doubtless he had seen her enter, and suddenly resolved to try a last chance with her. Helen's first impulse was to jump out of the coach and run away. Ay, but whither? After all that had taken place, she could not go back to Mr. Robert Cameron's. What could she say? How ridiculous her fears must seem! Whither else? Wherever she went, highness would doubtless follow her; and from what stranger could she hope to receive readier protection than from the benevolent looking old gentleman who sat in the coach? While she was yet thinking,

the coach started at a smart trot. Highness looked astonished at seeing Helen.

"You perceive, Miss Cameron, that we are destined never to be separated," he exclaimed.

Helen instinctively fell back upon the weapon of defence which she had found so powerful of old.

"I believe your Highness is mistaken," she answered promptly. "There was a time when I thought your Highness and—certain articles of your toilet inseparable: but I was mistaken; and you were destined to be separated."

The old gentleman looked at the prince. Who could it be? "His highness!" He did not like the looks of highness; and, like a true Englishman, old as he was, he was ready to stand up for the beautiful young lady, who clearly did not like highness any better. As for highness, he soon plucked up courage to say in Russ:

"My little dove——"

Helen rudely interrupted highness, and asked the old gentleman:

"Did you ever see a man who looked thirty years older than he had done the day before?"

"Never!"

The old gentleman stared at Helen, and was

far from feeling comfortable. Easy to see that he was a nervous old gentleman. Highness was abashed, and remained silent for nearly a minute: Helen watching him the while, and the old gentleman and his wife glancing at them both uneasily. At length highness mustered courage to accost Helen, who immediately tried her battery again.

"I once saw such a man," she said: "his hair had fallen off, and his teeth had dropped out, and his cheeks had fallen in, all in one night. In the evening he had looked as young as this gentleman; and, in the morning, he looked as old as you, sir."

"Bless me!" cried the old gentleman, looking still more nervous; "and what may have been the cause of the change? Some sudden calamity, I suppose?"

"Yes, a shipwreck."

"Bless me! A shipwreck! Well, I never! Did he lose property or friends by the wreck?"

"He very nearly lost his own precious self. In fact, a part of him did come off."

"What became of that part?"

"He left it behind him in the ship."

"What part was it?"

"His hair, his teeth, and his complexion."

“Did you ever?”

Highness had collapsed again. But he soon took his revenge. Sitting by Helen's side, he began to press against her in a very unpleasant manner. Helen once more resorted to her battery.

“Did you ever know a man who was the joint production of a tailor, a dentist, and a hairdresser?”

“Good gracious!”

“I know one; and, if he does not behave better, I mean to expose him, sir.”

The old gentleman had now made up his mind that Helen was not “all right” in the upper story. He became so nervous, that Helen saw she could expect no help from him. Oh, if Captain Maleenovsky were only there!

“My dear Elena!” said highness in Russ, pressing against Helen with his hand.

A happy thought coming to her mind, she answered in the same language:

“If your Highness does not desist, I will pull off your wig.”

Her threat was magical in its effect. In a moment, Prince Boriatinsky's arm dropped by his side, as if it had been paralysed. To

him the thought which Helen suggested was the horror of horrors. What an introduction to English society, in which he hoped to shine as he had done in Russian ! So Helen's threat unnerved him, and kept him quiet till the coach stopped at the end of the first stage.

The old gentleman and his wife went out ; and highness followed their example. Helen hoped she was going to be rid of him at last. Alas, he had gone only to make inquiries, and soon returned. Helen had taken a seat at the back of the coach ; and highness sat down by her side. No one else came in ; and Helen had the agreeable prospect of being alone with highness for the next stage. Not so bad, though, as she had thought at first : had not her threat evidently tamed the bird of prey ?

Just as they were about to start, a carriage, drawn by a pair of dashing greys, drove up to the inn. A handsome lady, somewhere about forty years old, richly dressed in the height of fashion, stepped down with the help of a footman in livery, and came up to the coach. She was not above the middle height ; but the dignity of her carriage made her look tall. Everything about her indicated wealth. She

was about to enter the coach, when benevolent old gentleman bustled up to her, and said something in a low voice. Helen did not hear what he said ; but I may just as well tell you that he kindly warned the lady against going into the coach. And so Helen's comfort was to be once more marred by this benevolent busybody ! The lady bowed gracefully, and said in a clear, ringing voice :

“Thank you, sir.”

The sweetness of the voice struck Helen most. Undeterred by the old gentleman's warning, she looked into the coach, and meant to judge for herself. Helen's rare loveliness clearly made a deep impression on her : her eyes seemed quite drawn toward her ; and there was a sweet smile on her own comely face.

“Now, ma'am, take your seat, if you're going,” said the guard : “we've no time to lose.”

And he opened the coach-door. The lady looked doubtful for a moment, and then answered :

“Oh, certainly, I'm going.”

Didn't Helen's heart leap ? The lady paused for a moment, and looked at Prince

Boriatinsky, as if she thought that a gentleman would certainly give up his back seat to a lady. Seeing that he did not move, or seem likely to do so, she was about to sit down in front, when Helen rose and said :

“Take my seat.”

“Thank you,” answered the lady, quietly taking the seat which Helen had just left.

Helen sat down in front ; and Prince Boriatinsky immediately seated himself by her side. The lady quietly watched the two.

Helen, on her part, was scanning the lady's face. A winning face ; by no means wanting in power, but with the sense of sweetness pervading all. No doubt, at one time a beautiful face : indeed, in the best sense, beautiful still, though the bloom of youth was gone. A face, on which the traces of deep suffering were unmistakable, but which had as unmistakably fought its way to deep peace. A saint-like face, Helen would have said, if the rich trappings had not somewhat jarred with the thought. At any rate, a face which she thought she could trust. Accordingly she felt happier : there was a sense of security in even looking at that face.

Not a word was said for some time. In the meanwhile, highness was doing his best to annoy Helen by pushing up against her.

"Leave me alone!" cried Helen, looking appealingly to Mrs. Somebody.

"I think you will be more comfortable, if you sit by my side," suggested the lady.

Helen at once took her seat by the lady's side; with a sense of relief unspeakable.

Highness checked, but not baffled. Who could tell how far Mrs. Somebody was going? Perhaps only to the next stage. And then?

In the meanwhile, the lady entered into conversation with Helen, who felt so much drawn toward her that she answered her questions without reserve. In the course of the conversation, it came out that Helen had that morning arrived at Hull; whereupon Prince Romanisky remarked that she had voyaged in the same ship with him, and cunningly insinuated without directly asserting, that her friends had placed her under his care.

"That is false!" cried Helen fiercely: "we knew nothing of his coming; and, indeed, it was not till after we had left Cronstadt harbour that he joined us."

The lady's face brightened up strangely when

Helen spoke of having come from Cronstadt. In a tone of deep interest, she said :

“And so you come from St. Petersburg ! And are you here alone ?”

“There is a servant of Mr. Cameron’s outside the coach.”

“Mr. Cameron !” exclaimed Mrs. Somebody, somewhat eagerly : “ what Mr. Cameron ?”

“ A cousin of my father’s at Hull.”

“ And is your name Cameron ?”

“ Yes.”

“ A daughter of Mr. Hugh Cameron of St. Petersburg ?”

The lady asked this question with strangely eager interest, her eyes flashing as she spoke.

“ Yes,” answered Helen : “ do you know my father, then ?”

“ I knew him years ago, my dear : before you were born. I have not seen him for years ; but I shall never cease to esteem him as a good and honest man.”

“ And your name ?”

“ You would not know it. I have married since I used to know him. But how far are you going, my child ?”

"As far as Appleby by the coach."

"How strange! That's just where I am going. And will your friends meet you at Appleby?"

"No, ma'am."

And Helen related the cause of her sudden departure from Hull: her friends near Ulleswater did not even know of her coming!

"Well, this is a wonderful coincidence!" cried the lady. "I have a house near Ulleswater. My carriage will be waiting for me at Appleby; and I shall be delighted to drive you to your friend's house."

Helen was nearly overwhelmed with this happy *dénouement*. The deliverance was so sudden and so complete, that her feelings carried her away; and she burst into tears. The lady tried to calm her by her caresses. A sudden impulse came over Helen: with her temperament she could not help it. She threw her arms round the strange lady's neck, and said:

"Forgive me: I feel as if I had known you all my life."

All this time Prince Boriatinsky was as entirely overlooked as if he were not there. He did not relish the turn things had taken.

But what to do? His little game was up: Helen was as safe as if Captain Maleenovsky were there to shield her. Best, surely, to leave the coach at the next halting-place, which they were approaching now? No: he would go a little farther, and see what chances might yet turn up.

When the coach stopped, Tom came up to the window; and Helen pointed him out to Mrs. Somebody. The lady asked him, pointing to Prince Boriatinsky:

"Do you know this gentleman?"

"Niver set eyes on him afore, as I knows on," answered Tom promptly.

"Do you know this young lady?"

Tom looked doubtful for a moment, to Helen's surprise, and then said slowly:

"Well, mem, I can't say as I knows her of my own knowledge; seeing as how I niver set eyes on her afore this morning, as I knows on."

"But you know who she is?"

"Well, mem, my measter he told me as how she were the darter of his cousin, Mr. Hugh Cameron of St. Petersburg."

"And you came with her from Mr. Cameron's house this morning?" continued Mrs. Somebody.

"Well, mem, in a way I did."

"What do you mean by 'in a way'?"

"You see, mem, the lady sits inside the carriage; and I stands in my usual place behind."

Mrs. Somebody smiled at Tom's scrupulous adherence to facts, and went on to say:

"And Mr. Cameron did not intrust this young lady to this gentleman?"

"Certainly not, mem."

Mrs. Somebody turned to Prince Boriatinsky, and said:

"And now, sir, I would advise you to leave us. If I told these people how you have been annoying this young lady, they would handle you rather roughly; and let me tell you that the anger of an English mob is no child's play. I think it will be wisest for you to decamp," she added, laughing.

"So do I, mem," echoed Tom.

Highness thought so too. In addition to other reasons, it would be highly disagreeable to have his name dragged in the mire and bruited abroad as the hero of a lynch-lawing mob, especially if Helen carried out her threat and—left him hairless in the hands of the mob. He, the high and mighty Prince Boria-

tinsky; come on "an important diplomatic mission" to England! Here surely, if anywhere, "discretion was the better part of valour." So he slunk away, looking small indeed! Uncommonly like an ill-conditioned cur, sneaking off with its tail between its legs! "Sarved him right!" as Joey would have said. *Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* Mrs. Somebody and Helen were left alone.

They remained alone for several stages, and cultivated each other's acquaintance to their mutual satisfaction. Helen had never felt so much drawn to any one at first sight before. I daresay the loss of Miss Meldrum, the sorrow which she felt on her behalf, and the craving to fill the void made in the heart, hastened the process. There was something so inviting in Mrs. Somebody's face and manner, that Helen felt as if she could open her heart to her. And she did open it—on all subjects but one. Truly, Captain Maleenovsky was too sacred a being to be chattered about even to Mrs. Somebody!

The lady helped on the revelations by the many questions which she asked. She seemed to be interested in every one Helen knew at St. Petersburg. The Camerons, the Randals, and the etceteras whom you don't know, were

all discussed in turn. Mrs. Somebody had been at St. Petersburg many years before. Helen's own history, all but the forbidden subject, was overhauled. At length the lady said, smiling:

"And, now that you have told me so much about yourself and your belongings, I daresay you are burning with curiosity to know who I am."

"No, ma'am," answered Helen: "it seems to me as if I had known you for years. I had quite forgotten that I do not even know your name. But 'what is in a name? The rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet.' It is yourself that I feel inclined to—to——"

"To love, I hope."

"Oh, yes."

"So you have read Shakspeare?"

"Yes, Miss Meldrum was a worshipper of Shakspeare."

"Still, dear, it is the orthodox thing that I should be duly introduced to you," said Mrs. Somebody, laughing gently. "In Shakspeare's times, if his idea about names was common, it might have been highly convenient that I should be known as Mrs. No. 574; but, in these more prosaic days, it seems on the whole more convenient that I should be called Mrs.

Beresford, of Drayton Hall, in the county of Cumberland."

Well, it was a grand sounding title certainly. But, if it were meant to strike Helen with awe, it missed its aim. Helen was too much used to the names of princes in Russia, and names of the highest too, to be much moved.

"What a beautiful name!" she cried: "I shall love you all the more, Mrs. Beresford."

"There is something in a name then, after all!" answered Mrs. Beresford, smiling.

"It seems so."

Helen coloured slightly as she thought of the slip she had made.

"I think so too. For example, your own name: it is a sweet name; and I think no other name would suit you so well as Helen Cameron."

"I am glad you like it."

It had been raining the whole day; and, as they went on, they were told that it had rained, without ceasing, for several days: Their progress was, therefore, unusually slow. Helen thought how dreary the journey would have been without Mrs. Beresford; and her heart was full of thankfulness to the strange lady who had been sent to her succour.

It was late when they entered Appleby. Theilly roads, always heavy, had been made heavier by the rain; and the coach was greatly behind its time. As they drove up the town, Mrs. Beresford asked Helen:

"What will you do if your aunt has no accommodation for you, as you imagine?"

"Oh, I can sleep any where."

"How would you like to stay with me?"

"That would be delightful!" cried Helen, clapping her hands with childish glee.

"Well, my dear, I think you had better go home with me at once, and sleep at my house to-night at any rate. In the morning we will go in search of your aunt. She does not expect you: so it will make no difference to her."

"But what about Tom?"

"We shall find room for him. Do you think you can trust yourself to my care for one night?"

"Oh, Mrs. Beresford, you know I could trust myself to your care for my whole life."

When they stopped at the inn at Appleby, they found Mrs. Beresford's carriage awaiting her. As they stepped out of the coach, Tom touched his hat to Helen, and said:

"If you'll go into the parlour and wait a bit, miss, I'll see if I can get a po'chaise."

"This lady has kindly offered to drive me in her carriage."

Tom stroked his well-shaved chin, and looked perplexed. A strange lady, whom they had never seen before! Mrs. Beresford explained to him more fully the arrangement which she proposed. Tom stroked his chin harder, and seemed more perplexed than ever. But the result of the conference was that they all went to Drayton Hall that night. It was past midnight when they arrived; and Tom was not sorry that they had not to turn out in search of Winton Lodge at that unreasonable hour.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFIDENCE.

"Celia. But is all this for your father?"

Rosalind. No, some of it is for my father's child: O how full of briars is this working-day world!

Cel. They are but burs, cousin, thrown upon thee in holiday foolery: if we walk not in the trodden paths, our very petticoats will catch them.

Ros. I could shake them off my coat: these burs are in my heart.

Cel. Hem them away.

Ros. I would try; if I could hem, and have him.

Cel. Come, come, wrestle with thy affections.

Ros. O, they take the part of a better wrestler than myself."

SHAKESPEARE: *As you like it.*

THE following morning, Mrs. Beresford took Helen to Winton Lodge. Mrs. Cameron had no room for Helen, and eagerly accepted Mrs. Beresford's offer. She had heard of Mrs. Beresford as a rich widow with high connections; and, being somewhat ambitious herself, and anxious to push her daughters into good society, she rejoiced at the opportunity of cultivating her acquaintance. It was therefore agreed between the high contracting powers, that, during Helen's visit (nominally) to her aunt, Drayton Hall should be her home: moreover, that, as long as the treaty lasted, said Hall should be open to all the Camerons,

to go in and out, feed and talk, romp and play, according to their will.

As for Helen, she was delighted with this arrangement. Somehow she did not take kindly to her aunt and cousins. In spite of the court which they paid her as the sole heiress of a great millionaire, she thought them shallow and heartless. It seemed that her aunt regarded her chiefly in the light of the lustre which the heiress threw upon her precious self. It needed no prophet to tell Helen that Mrs. Cameron would go and boast, as she actually did, of having "entertained her wealthy niece in Cumberland; though," she added, with a homage to truth, "she stayed a great part of the time with her dear friend, Mrs. Beresford, of Drayton Hall." As for the cousins Cameron, Helen could not help fancying that they envied her, and even hated her, because she was so much richer than they. They came to Drayton Hall every day, and flattered her; but she felt sure, that, when they returned to Winton Lodge at night, they pulled her to pieces.

All this contrasted so strongly with the genuine and disinterested kindness of Mrs. Beresford, that Helen was more than ever

drawn toward that lady. Almost unconsciously to herself, her mind acquired a healthier tone. Mrs. Beresford's influence over her was most wholesome. She became more cheerful : her natural sprightliness returned. Not that she forgot Captain Maleenovsky ; but she learnt to master her feelings better. There was something in the atmosphere of victorious peace, which the elder lady diffused around her, that braced the younger lady's moral constitution. Helen was more and more convinced that Mrs. Beresford had suffered much in her time ; and, yet, the deepest mark, which those sufferings had left behind them, was that of victory. Whence that victory ? Helen longed to open her heart to one who had suffered so much and triumphed so nobly : feeling assured that Mrs. Beresford could help her (what could she not do ?) to victory and peace.

One evening, some days after their arrival, they were sitting together in the drawing-room. Mrs. Cameron and her daughters had spent the day with them, but had just departed. Mrs. Beresford picked up a newspaper which lay on the table, and began to read. She was not usually a newspaper reader ; but a neighbour, who had called that day, had left a London

paper by mistake. Mrs. Beresford seemed to be absorbed in its contents. Helen looked at her wistfully for some time, moving her lips more than once as if about to speak. At length she mustered courage to say :

“Dear Mrs. Beresford, I have something to tell you.”

“Say on.”

But Mrs. Beresford did not look up from the paper.

“I scarcely know how to begin.”

“That is so unlike you!”

“I have several times tried to speak ; but I have not had the courage.”

For the first time Mrs. Beresford looked up from the paper, and saw that Helen was blushing.

“Why, my child?”

“I fear you will laugh at me : I am sure you will think that I have been foolish.”

“If you have been foolish, better let some one else know it : it will help you to be wiser another time. Come here, my child !”

Helen rose, and went up to Mrs. Beresford. She had fallen into the habit of yielding to the elder lady in everything. Mrs. Beresford folded her to her heart.

“Don’t laugh at me too much.”

... and she was the motherly
... She
... herself
... last:
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... to whom
... Mrs. Beres-

... "The Mother?"
... of
... "

... that she would
... terms.
... of her?"

... "

... be perfect
... and still"

... have helped me:
... daughter to
... and he would only have

made matters worse by threatening Captain Maleenovsky."

"Well, dear, he deserves all that your father could do to him. He has treated you shamefully."

"Don't say that, dear Mrs. Beresford: you don't know how noble and heroic he is."

"Doesn't look like it."

"No doubt he had reasons."

"He ought to have told you his precious reasons: no man has a right to trifle with a girl's heart. One thing is clear: you must forget him; because he is unworthy of you."

"You are unjust to him."

"Unjust!" cried Mrs. Beresford: "why, by his own confession, he is guilty of a dreadful crime."

"I don't believe it!"

"Then you think he is a liar. And you would have a liar for a husband!"

"I think he exaggerated."

"At any rate, dear Helen, your own self-respect requires that you should forget him now. Whatever his motive may be, it is clear that he wishes to have nothing more to do with you; and it would be unmaidenly to cherish the thought of him after that. Indeed,

my darling, I fear you have been too un-
maidenly already. Running after a man who
flies from you !”

Helen was sobbing aloud: she could not
help thinking that the judgment was too severe;
that even Mrs. Beresford did not thoroughly
understand her. But suddenly she started up,
and confronted Mrs. Beresford with flashing
eyes.

“ You don’t believe——”

“ No, my darling, I don’t believe you meant
to do it; but it looks very much like it.”

A new train of thoughts passed through
Helen’s mind: painful, humbling, distracting.
She saw what she had done in a new light.
She blushed, and hung down her head. Her
voice was faint and subdued, almost toned down
to a whisper, as she asked :

“ Do you think he—misunderstood me ?”

“ Unless he is different from the common
run of men, he must have thought you bold
and forward.”

There was a sudden recoil of thought and
feeling in Helen’s mind: the late train of
thought was too loathsome not to be spewed
out. She cried out with an energy which
almost startled Mrs. Beresford :

"He *is* different from the common run of men : I never saw any man so noble, so generous, as he is !"

"Generous !"

There was an unbelieving smile on Mrs. Beresford's gentle face.

"Yes, Mrs. Beresford, generous and self-sacrificing : oh, no, he is too great, too noble, to have misunderstood me."

"Let us hope so. But, at any rate, it is none the less your duty to forget him."

"I cannot : oh, I cannot !"

"Really, Helen, you seem quite infatuated about him."

"When I think how great and heroic he is ; when I remember how often he has saved my life at the risk of his own, and how nobly he mastered himself and submitted to the imputation of cowardice for my sake ;—it seems the height of ingratitude to forget him. Oh, Mrs. Beresford, I would willingly be his slave, if I could but serve him ! I would gladly die, I would gladly bear any amount of disgrace or pain, for his sake ! I love him, I love him ; and I don't care if the whole world knows it."

Mrs. Beresford scarcely knew how to deal with this outburst of love. To denounce it, to

reason with it, would have been utterly useless. She was silent for a long time, and looked grave and sad. Was she looking back to the past? Did she think of a time, many years ago, when she herself might have used much the same language? The memory of a conquered love is solemn to a thoughtful mind: the ghosts of other days return, and fill the air with their mournful presence. She drew Helen gently to herself, and, putting her arms round her, caressed her tenderly.

"Feeling as strongly as you do, I see how much you must have suffered, darling," she said after a long pause. "Don't think I am going to reproach you."

"I don't mind if you do: do anything you like except telling me to forget him. I can't! Crush my love? Yes. But forget him? No: never; never! There are times when I feel as if I should like to go into a nunnery. I have seen them in Russia: they look so calm and peaceful there."

There was another long pause, after which Mrs. Beresford said:

"Helen, darling, you have made me your confession: now let me make you mine. There was a time when I could use the same language to you. I can sympathise with you; because

I have gone through the same experience as yourself. I know what disappointed love means, my dear: I have undergone all the uncertainty, all the doubt, all the pain, which you have felt. It is now many years ago: before you were born; when I myself was younger than you are now. The man whom I loved was worthy of my love; and there was a time when I thought that nothing but death could sever us. But my friends objected to the match; and I would not go against their will. After a while, he loved me no more, and married another. What was my duty? Evidently to crush my love. This was the hard task set before me; and I have tried to do it."

"And have you *succeeded*?"

Helen spoke so pointedly, that Mrs. Beresford was startled.

"Hush, my child!" she said evasively: "there are some things too sacred to be closely scanned."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Beresford, don't be hard upon me," answered Helen: "you preach admirably; and yet it is evident that you yourself cannot practise what you preach."

"Don't misunderstand me, child. If I think of him now, it is only as belonging to the past. It is a sacred memory: a memory

which I would not be robbed of; which I should be the poorer for losing."

"Ah, I can understand that!"

"But I am almost ashamed of myself," continued Mrs. Beresford in an altered tone. "I do not often give way to such thoughts: you, my child, have brought them to my mind."

And she kissed and embraced the lovely girl with a tenderness which struck Helen strangely at the time, but which she could scarcely look back upon without tears in after days, when she knew more of Mrs. Beresford and her strange history.

"And, after all, you too married another," said Helen thoughtlessly.

"Oh, child, child, do not recall painful memories!" cried Mrs. Beresford beseechingly: "he whom I married has gone to his account!"

Helen longed to know something of Mrs. Beresford's married experience; but after this touching appeal she forebore to ask any more questions. It was the first time she had seen Mrs. Beresford excited; and it clothed her with a new interest. Hitherto she had always been so calm and self-mastered, that Helen had looked upon her as a being outside her own sphere; but, now that she found her to

be a mere woman like herself, she clung to her the closer, and craved her sympathy.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Beresford," she cried, "what should I do if I lost your esteem?"

"That is not likely, my darling. But it is time for us both to be in bed. I will sleep over your tale, and in the morning give you the best advice I can. One of your Russian proverbs says that wisdom comes with the night."

She rose, and lit a candle which stood on the table. She was in the habit of going round the house every night to see that all was right. In the performance of this duty she now went away, and left Helen alone.

When she returned, she found the girl with the paper in her hand, greedily devouring what she read. It must have interested her deeply; for, the next moment, she uttered a dreadful shriek, and fainted away. Mrs. Beresford ran up to her. But it was too late: the mischief was done.

The first leisure moment she had from waiting on Helen, she glanced at the paper. She soon alighted on a paragraph headed, "A DUEL." It appeared that Prince Boriatinsky had killed Captain Maleenovsky on Wimbledon Common.

CHAPTER XX.

AT HOME.

"Come, gentle death, the ebb of care,
The ebb of care, the flood of life;
The flood of life, the joyful fare;
The joyful fare, the end of strife;
The end of strife, that thing wish I:
Wherefore come death, and let me die."

Tottel's Miscellany (1557).

THE reunion between the Emperor and Empress had spread joy throughout the empire. Some few cynics indeed sneered; but a hidden chord had been touched in most hearts. Something beautiful in such a re-wedlock! But the joy was soon clouded over. No man can fully repair the mischief which his evil deeds have done. A dog is naughty; and then thinks that, by whining and wagging his tail, it can make all right. So, many a human cur, more currish than dogs, fancies that by a few tears and groans he can atone for the past. A great mistake: every deed has its bearing on to-morrow as well as on to-day. Repentance cannot undo what has been done: in spite of it, the law of retribution still holds on its way. As we have sown, we shall reap.

Alexander's tenderness and care could not save his wife from the fate to which his desertion had doomed her.

Elizabeth's life-long agony had undermined her health: in spite of all the joy which now shone upon her, she sickened and faded. The doctors ordered her to the south of Russia; and the town of Taganrog, on the sea of Azov, was fixed upon. Alexander resolved to go before; and make everything ready for his wife. His mind was overcast with dark forebodings; and he fancied that he would never return to Petersburg save in a coffin and a shroud. He was far from well; and the doctors earnestly besought him not to go. But he was deaf to all warnings. He had made up his mind: it was the least he could do for the wife he had wronged.

The retiring character of the Empress led her at all times to choose a quiet life; and, in the neighbourhood of Taganrog, she indulged her taste to her heart's wish. In the delicious climate of that region her nerves were braced, and the whole tone of her health raised. But what helped her recovery most was the unwearied care which her husband bestowed upon her. No longer Emperor and Empress

(for the nonce), but simple husband and wife—as at first. To those who knew their history (and who did not?), there was something unspeakably touching in the self-abandonment with which he tried to make up for the wrongs of the past. The Empress revived: never in her life so happy as now; the early days of her marriage brought back, with a heightened and yet a chastened bliss. A fresh lease of life given to the fading wife.

The Emperor took advantage of her recovery to make a tour through the Crimea. A fever raging there at the time: some reason to fear that Majesty had caught it.

After his return to Taganrog, he seemed much better; but the amendment was checked by news of a plot to take away his life. From that day he said that he was weary of life, and refused to follow Sir James Wylie's advice. Why live? If rescued from the maw of disease, it would be only to fall under the assassin's knife. Better die peacefully in bed, surrounded by wife and friends! This was the bitter draught reserved for the last days of his life.

In time the disease assumed a typhoid form. Prince Volkonsky, chief of the Emperor's suit, tried to persuade the Empress to remove from

the house: Elizabeth would not listen to the suggestion; indeed, hurled it back on its author with scorn. The very thought of it angered her; angered that meek and gentle soul of hers. Where should she be but by her suffering husband's side? Thank God, the estrangement and shame of past years had no longer any power to keep her away! No Anna now to come in between her and her husband. Desert him at such a time? Away with the base suggestion! They who made it knew her not. She devoted herself to him with the most self-sacrificing zeal, and was scarcely ever away from his side. Day after day passed by; and there she still was, tending him with that tenderness and care which none but a woman can bestow.

One day, Prince Volkonsky beckoned her away from the bedside, which she had not quitted for many a day. She followed him to the other end of the room, and asked what was the matter.

"Sir James Wylie despairs of his Majesty's life!" was the crushing answer.

For a moment the Empress gave way to her feelings. Had it come to that? The renewal of their youthful days so soon to come to a

close ! Startled, taken by surprise, almost overwhelmed with grief, she staggered, and nearly fainted away. But only for a moment : the next moment she had summoned all her courage to her help.

“Father, thy will be done !” she said, meekly lifting up her eyes heavenward.

For some days, the Emperor lay hovering between life and death. That sick-room was a battle-field on which time and eternity fought for the royal prey. For some time even Sir James Wylie could not say which would gain the victory.

One night she sat, as usual, in a chair by the bedside, gazing on the dear sufferer. She had not slept for many nights ; and Sir James Wylie joined with Prince Volkonsky in beseeching her to take a few hours’ rest. But the loyal-hearted wife doggedly refused. The crisis might come at any moment ; and, whoever might choose to be away, she would be there.

Alexander was in a state of lethargy the greater part of the night ; but every now and then strong fits of convulsion seized him, and seemed to rend his worn-out frame. In the intervals between the fits, there was unbroken

stillness in the room ; and Elizabeth could hear the clock ticking away the slowly passing moments. Hour after hour passed away : and still she could see no change ; nothing but that awful lethargy, followed by those frightful fits. Wearily she watched the weird shadows which the lamp threw on the wall, and longed for the morning to dawn.

The night wore away ; and the morning did dawn at last. And (O joy !) there was a slight change for the better in the dear sufferer. He opened his eyes : and, seeing his wife beside him, he smiled ; a sweet smile of thankfulness and love. In a moment, she was bending over him ; and he kissed her, and pressed her to his heart. He knew her ; but he could not speak. At the same time, Sir James Wylie drew near, and whispered in her ear. Her heart bounded with sudden joy. But had she not misunderstood him ? She asked :

“ What did you say ? ”

“ There is still hope.”

“ Thank God ! ”

In a few minutes, Alexander dropped off into a gentle slumber. The Empress sat down to write the joyful news to her husband's mother.

Unhappily, the night brought back some of the worst symptoms of the disease. Majesty violently convulsed : agony frightful to see. How his wife could bear to witness it all ? But she never flinched for a moment. Toward noon, the following day, Alexander was better : but his weakness became more and more alarming ; and, the day after, Sir James began to fear he would never rally again.

The night came : a long, dreary, dismal night. The sorrowing wife and the frightened courtiers stood round the imperial bed, helpless and hopeless. The precious life was ebbing fast away. Who can withstand the King of Terrors on his chosen battle-field ? An Emperor is as powerless in his grasp as the meanest of his lieges.

At length, the morning dawned : a day long to be remembered in the annals of Russia ; outwardly, a dull, grey, cheerless day, as if nature had a fellow-feeling with the coming bereavement. About half-past ten o'clock, Alexander opened his eyes—for the last time in this world ! Though he seemed to know all, his power of speech was gone. He cast a look on the Empress—Oh, such a look ! A last lingering look of unspeakable thankful-

ness, tenderness, and love ! He beckoned her to draw near, and then tenderly pressed her hand as if to bid her farewell ; and thus, amidst the sobs of those around him, he gently passed away from this world into a brighter. And so all was over ! The pain and the care and the fear ! The gentle sufferer had gone home at last.

The Empress, almost stifled by the strong feeling which she tried to keep down, was yet fully alive to all the requirements of the moment. With a breaking heart within, she kept up a sublime calmness without. Her courage and presence of mind were a wonder to all. Amidst the sobbing group (for Alexander was tenderly beloved), she was the only one that uttered not a sound. Woefully pale and cold and deathlike herself, she approached the body : with her own fingers closed the sightless eyes ; with her own handkerchief bound the lifeless face ; with her own hands raised the cross, the symbol of salvation, over the ruined frame. Then, embracing her husband for the last time, she fell on her knees by the side of the bed, and cried :

“ Saviour, forgive me all my sins ! It is at Thy will that he is taken from me ! ”

That was all she said. O faithful and loyal heart: faithful and loyal amidst sorrow and neglect; faithful in spite of his unfaithfulness; faithful and loyal to the very last! Is this thy reward? Is the crown of thorns thine only meed? Pray on; bear on: is there not a crown of glory awaiting thee yonder?

It was then only that the Empress retired to her own room, and gave free vent to her grief. A tie fastened in the days of early girlhood; a tie strengthened by two and thirty years of sorrow and of love; a tie knit closer than ever during the last year of their wedded life;—that tie had been snapped at last!

Long she wept and bitterly. But there was comfort as well as bitterness in those tears: a blessed thought, that the dear one had not been cut off while they were asunder; that he had been spared long enough to atone for the sorrow and shame of the long dreary years of estrangement; that, whenever she should be called away herself, it would be to rejoin her own Alexander, to part no more.

Full of this thought, she was calmer and happier. Never a selfish woman, she now felt as if she had been selfish in brooding over her own grief. Was she the only one whom her

husband's death would touch? Were there not millions to share her grief? Above all, was there not his aged mother yonder, whom her own letter, written three days earlier, would soon fill with a deceitful joy? Yearning after the dear old mother in the sisterhood of grief, she sat down at once to her desk, and wrote this touching letter, which always sounds to me like one wail of agony.

"Taganrog, November 19, 1825.

"MAMMA!

"Our angel is in heaven; and I am still on earth! Who would have thought that I, feeble and wasted, should have survived him! Mamma! Do not abandon me; for I am utterly alone in this world of sorrow.

"Our dear departed one wears his own benevolent expression in death: his smile proves to me that he is happy, and that he sees other things than he beheld while he was among us.

"My only consolation, under this irreparable loss, is that I shall not long survive him; that I hope to rejoin him soon.

"ELIZABETH."

Hope on, brave heart! Thy hope is not in vain.
"Rest in the Lord; and wait patiently for

Him : and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Hope on, then, loyal and faithful wife ! Not long before thou shalt be with thy " angel in heaven ! "

The body of the Emperor was embalmed, and placed in the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky, at Taganrog, where a funeral service was performed. But this was only a rehearsal of a grander service which was to follow. What would you have ? An emperor's corpse can't be treated like that of an ordinary mortal. It was carried to St. Petersburg, and laid with the remains of his forefathers in the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. Majesty's foreboding had been fulfilled : he did not enter his beloved capital again save in a coffin and a shroud.

So long as the body remained at Taganrog, there was something, however poor, to keep the Empress there. But, as soon as it was removed, she had but one wish left : to rejoin his family and die. With Alexander's life her mission on earth was ended ! A mistaken thought : none of us lives merely for another ; each having a mission and a destiny of his own. But a thought not to be wantonly laughed at or scorned.

When she left Taganrog, a touching scene took place. The whole population crowded round her, and mingled their tears with hers. Loth to part from the woman who had scattered blessings all around her during her sojourn in their midst, they accompanied her a long way from the town. Elizabeth had hoped to reach Kalooga, where the Empress-mother was coming to meet her. But her strength gave way; and, at every step of the journey, she grew worse and worse. Still her courage never failed. Her physicians begged her to rest; but on she went.

On reaching Belev, she was so weak that she could scarcely sit. It was early in the evening when she retired to rest. All was quiet through the night; and the lady who sat up with her thought that her sleep was unusually sound. But, about four o'clock in the morning, beginning to feel anxious about the long-drawn slumber, she approached the bed, and saw that the sufferer's face was changed. All her ladies and physicians were summoned at once; and, as they surrounded her bed, the blood rushing to her head made it seem as if she had recovered the brilliant complexion of which she had once been proud,

but which sorrow had long since chased away. While they yet wondered, her lips gently moved, and her peaceful soul quietly passed away.

She had rejoined her "angel in heaven." They were "lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." "I myself knew that august couple," says a Russian poet: "he was charming as hope; she delightful as bliss. It seems but yesterday when Catherine adorned their youthful brows with nuptial roses, soon to be followed by diadems; but, alas! too soon did the genius of death crown their pale brows with poppies. What, then, is life?" *Sic transit!*

END OF VOL. II.



